# EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CANADIAN FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEES FOR ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Forest Advisory Committees (FACs) in Canada were established in the early 1990s through provincial legislation and market-based forest certification schemes to advance the aims of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). These committees aimed to incorporate a broad range of stakeholder and rightsholder perspectives and social values into forest management planning processes. There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of these committees in advancing contributions to SFM, and to better understand what factors characterize their effectiveness. In particular, this research focused on understanding the perspectives of the forest companies and provincial governments that sponsor committees and are responsible for the uptake of committee recommendations in decision-making.

This thesis adopted a mixed methods approach, building on quantitative data collected through a national survey of FACs in 2016. Qualitative methods were used to explore the effectiveness of selected committees, including telephone interviews with committee sponsors and more indepth case study of two committees in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The study found an emphasis on process, rather than outcomes, in participants' characterizations of committee effectiveness. Limited evidence was found of contributions to SFM, though commitees were more influential on outcomes related to local issues such as access and recreation in the forest. The strategic importance of committees for planning and certification purposes was also revealed. Implications for public forest governance in Canada were considered, along with recommendations moving forward.

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Sherry R. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Figure 2.1) is reproduced in this thesis with the permission of Taylor & Francis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| CCFM | Canadian Council of Forest Ministers |
| CSA | Canadian Standards Association |
| DUCs | Ducks Unlimited Canada |
| FAC | Forest Advisory Committee |
| FMA | Forest Management Area |
| FMP | Forest Management Plan |
| FRAG | Forest Resources Advisory Group |
| FSC | Forest Stewardship Council |
| HWP | Hinton Wood Products |
| LCC | Local Citizens' Committee (Ontario) |
| MNRF | Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Ontario) |
| NRCAN | Natural Resources Canada |
| PAG | Public Advisory Group |
| SES | Saskatchewan Environmental Society |
| SFI | Sustainable Forestry Initiative |
| SFM | Sustainable Forest Management |
| VOIT | Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets |

# CHAPTER ONE

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Sustainability issues often involve multiple actors trying to make decisions in ways that balance social, environmental, and economic values. Government, industry, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous peoples, and communities are all interested in having input into natural resource management. Often, collaborative, participatory processes are used to try and reconcile these diverse viewpoints, while also attempting to achieve adequate representation and legitimacy in decision-making (George and Reed 2017) and promoting social learning, trust, and social capacity (Egunyu et al. 2016; Parkins 2010). In addition, many claim that collaborative natural resource management can improve the quality of decision-making with respect to the environment (e.g. Beierle 2002; Conley and Moote 2003). Assessing the effectiveness of environmental public participation efforts in achieving these and other outcomes is an ongoing theme in the literature (e.g. Koontz and Thomas 2006; Reed 2008; Chess 2000).

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) is an attempt to improve forest management by incorporating a wider range of social and ecological values into the planning process. This movement developed in contrast to the focus exclusively on timber production for economic benefit. Created by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers in the early 1990s, this framework has been adopted in Canada by forest companies and provincial governments (Rotherham and Armson 2016). Collaboration for SFM often takes the form of Forest Advisory Committees (FACs), where local stakeholders, Indigenous peoples, and community members are invited to provide input into forest management and planning. Previous research has shown high levels of participant satisfaction with this process, as well as positive outcomes such as increased learning and trust on committees (Parkins et al. 2006; Hunt 2015; Nenko et al. 2019b). Less attention has been paid to the perspectives of the forest companies and provincial governments that sponsor these committees. There is also the danger that participatory processes, like advisory committees, may become a formality with little influence or uptake resulting from public input. By investigating the influence of FACs in advancing SFM, particularly from the perspective of committee sponsors, we may gain a fuller understanding of the effectiveness of these processes and make improvements to public participation in forestry.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this research was to assess the effectiveness of Forest Advisory Committees (FACs) in advancing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Canada, particularly from the perspective of committee sponsors, i.e. forest company representatives and provincial government officials.

## 1.3 Objectives

The four research objectives of this thesis were to:

1. characterize how members and sponsors understand process and outcome criteria for effectiveness;
2. identify policy areas, management decisions, or specific practices that have been influenced by Forest Advisory Committee recommendations;
3. explore the extent to which Forest Advisory Committees have influenced Sustainable Forest Management practices and policies; and
4. develop recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of Forest Advisory Committees to advance Sustainable Forest Management.

## 1.4 Societal and Scholarly Relevance

One of the key questions in environmental governance is whether and how collaborative processes in natural resource management can effectively influence decisions and policies (Reed 2008). This is especially relevant with respect to public resources, such as Canada's forests, over 90% of which are held as public land (NRCan 2019a). At present, research has examined many aspects of FACs and forest governance in Canada, but little attention has been paid in the scholarly literature to the perspectives of committee sponsors. My research fills this gap by helping to understand how forest companies and governments view the FAC process, and thereby allowing for comparison with the views of committee members. Since sponsoring companies and governments ultimately hold decision-making power with respect to forest management, their views are particularly relevant to assessing the influence of FACs on actual outcomes.

This research is timely because SFM has been the dominant forest management model in Canada for nearly thirty years, and many FACs have been in existence for upwards of fifteen and twenty years (Rotherham and Armson 2016). It is important to evaluate whether these models are working well for incorporating public values into decision-making, or whether it is time to revisit citizen participation in the Canadian forest sector. This research contributes to evolving

practice in environmental public participation more generally, with an aim to improving these processes in future.

### 1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. The following chapter reviews the literature relevant to environmental governance, public participation, and FACs in Canada. Chapter three outlines the methods used in this research. Chapter four presents results from interviews that relate to the first research objectives characterizing effectiveness for FACs. Chapter five provides results related to the second and third objectives regarding outcomes from FAC processes. The findings of this research in relation to the evaluation of environmental public participation are discussed further in chapter six. Finally, chapter seven offers concluding thoughts on the implications of this thesis for further research.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter situates FACs within the broader landscape of public participation in environmental governance in Canada and discusses the implications of attempting to evaluate participatory efforts. This literature review begins by exploring trends in environmental governance, including the inclusion of non-state actors in decision-making and the importance of Indigenous engagement. I then discuss the rise of citizen involvement in environmental decision-making, as well as rationales for participatory approaches to environmental governance. Next, the evaluation of public participation efforts is reviewed to assess how questions of effectiveness have been dealt with in the literature. Finally, the review ends with a synthesis of current knowledge about public participation in the Canadian forestry sector, leading to the knowledge gap this research addresses.

### 2.1 Environmental Governance

#### 2.1.1 Trends in Environmental Governance

Governance is concerned with the formal and informal processes of collective decision-making within hierarchies, markets, and networks (Bevir 2012). The term governance is generally seen as more inclusive than government, and emphasizes horizontal processes of partnership and collaboration in natural resource decision-making (Berkes 2010). Environmental governance can be referred to as the "broader processes and institutions through which societies make decisions that affect the environment" (Armitage et al. 2012, 246). Environmental decision-making typically involves multiple stakeholders and rights-holders with contested values and viewpoints as to what the desired outcomes should be. Often governments or managers have been tasked with balancing these viewpoints to achieve acceptable outcomes for governing public resources (Diduck et al. 2015; Beckley et al. 2005). Governance literature also highlights many attributes of "good governance" including accountability, transparency, equity, efficiency, justice, responsiveness, and effectiveness (Armitage et al. 2012; Lockwood 2010).

Increasingly, citizens and non-state actors have become involved in environmental governance decisions regarding collective resources (Armitage et al. 2012; Diduck et al. 2015; Lemos and Agrawal 2006). Pal (2014) details how, since the 1980s, the role of government has

shifted more broadly towards decentralized governance by multiple actors against the backdrop of larger forces like globalization and new public management. Citizen engagement and partnership processes are identified as the two major trends in Canadian policymaking (Pal 2014). Diduck et al. (2015) identify several participatory approaches for environmental management in Canada, including adaptive co-management, advisory committees and social entrepreneurship. Armitage et al. (2012) describe changing governance arrangements with respect to the environment, including the emergence of new actors in environmental governance and increasing emphasis on adaptation and flexibility in collaborative processes, especially in Canada's north. Berkes (2010) details a parallel devolution in decision-making towards more localized, community-based institutions such as co-management institutions where government and local users formally share power. These examples demonstrate multiple models of increased citizen involvement in environmental decision-making.

This movement stems from public demands for more input on decision-making, government's desire to shift responsibility to the private sector, and calls for more deliberative, democratic decision-making on issues that concern broader society (Reed 2008). Berkes (2010) describes the principle that decisions should be made by those actors whose livelihoods are most closely affected by them, and how this has been incorporated into international conceptualizations of good governance. Indeed, governments and public agencies around the world are increasingly engaging in various forms of public participation or "stakeholder engagement" with those citizens most affected by decisions concerning the environment (Beierle 2002; Conley and Moote 2003; Reed 2008).

In particular, the private sector has taken on a larger role in delivering public goods and services in partnership with the public sector (Pal 2014). Lemos and Agrawal (2006) observe that hybrid governance arrangements such as market-focused instruments can play an important role in resolving environmental issues, particularly where the state lacks the authority or capacity to act. Ansell and Gash (2008) note that a history of conflict between stakeholders can also prompt collaborative efforts as an alternative to managerial policymaking. Non-governmental environmental organizations also often play a role in promoting sustainable governance decisions (George and Reed 2017). Margerum (2008) presents a typology of various types of environmental collaboratives that ranging from action-oriented, grassroots efforts to higher-level

policy collaboratives suggesting that each participatory process may target different outcomes and involve different groups.

The role of First Nations and Indigenous communities in natural resource decision-making is also becoming more prominent in the literature, including in Canada. As noted by Armitage et al. (2012), knowledge co-production processes have emerged that attempt to integrate various ways of knowing without privileging Western science over other forms of local or Indigenous knowledge. The increased importance of Indigenous engagement, especially in northern and remote resource-based communities, is noted as a key trend in Canadian environmental governance by Kramkowski and Mulvihill (2017). Their study remarked that since Indigenous communities have increasing influence over decisions about development and resource extraction projects, the relationship between First Nations and municipalities, industry, and government requires continuing concerted effort from all of these parties. Teitelbaum and colleagues (2019) demonstrated how Indigenous nations challenged forest certification processes in Quebec due to a lack of free and informed consent about operations in their traditional territory. Beckley et al. (2005) also assert that the *1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms* added renewed urgency to the need to involve Indigenous peoples into forest planning processes and resource development. These trends make it clear that increasingly, environmental decision-making has shifted away from government towards governance, and now requires the involvement of many actors including Indigenous peoples, private firms, non-governmental organizations, and citizens.

### 2.1.2 Citizen Involvement in Environmental Decision-Making

Citizen involvement in environmental decision-making emerged alongside calls for participatory planning processes more generally in areas such as urban planning (Arnstein 1969). International concern over environmental issues in the 1960s and 70s led to an increased focus on environmental governance in industrialized countries (Parson 2000). Developments such as the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1969 in the United States and campaigns against chemical spraying in Canada in the 1970s led to increased public awareness about environmental issues (Beckley et al. 2005). By the 1980s, many stakeholders were concerned about central governments' lack of ability to responsibly manage and implement environmental policies (Berkes 2010). Individuals began demanding more access to, and inclusion in,

government decision-making, and the shift from government to governance more broadly has seen the range of actors in public decision-making expand greatly (Pal 2014).

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (1969) with respect to urban planning provided one of the earliest frameworks for public participation processes, asserting that some levels of citizen involvement, such as delegation or citizen control, are more meaningful than others, like simply informing or placating citizens. Arnstein's central premise was that the type of participation engaged in matters deeply for the meaningfulness of the outcomes that can be expected from the process. Decades later, scholars are still examining how and why different types of participation contribute to robust environmental decision-making. For example, Reed et al. (2018) reimagine Arnstein's ladder as a "wheel of participation" and suggest a typology of participation that can be applied to different situations based on factors such as context, design, power dynamics, and spatial scale.

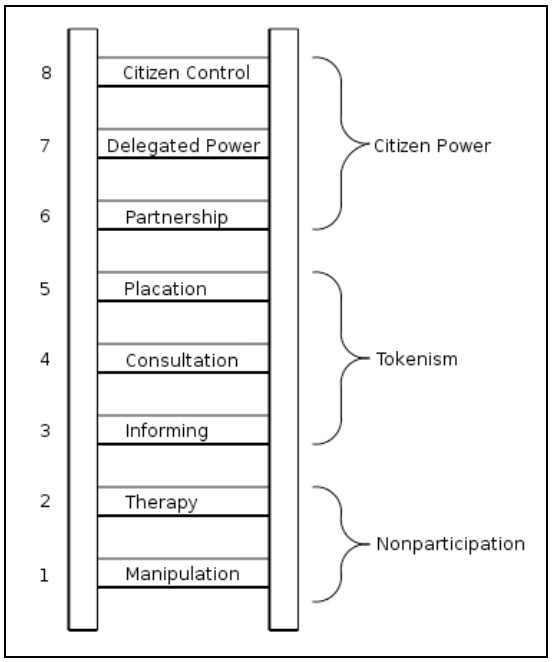


**Figure 2.1 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation**

Participatory models may devolve or "download" some degree of decision-making to non-state actors (Parson 2000). As Berkes (2010) notes, popular democratic principles support the idea that power should be shared across different levels of governance locally, regionally, and nationally. Scholars such as Putnam (1995) and Skocpol (2004) have famously lamented the decline of democratic capacity and social capital in North America. The tension between increasing demands for decentralized decision-making and the lessening inclination of everyday

citizens to participate in such efforts has led some (e.g. Kasperson 2006; Parkins and Sinclair 2014) to call for participatory governance models which focus on building long term, deliberative capacity within communities.

A focus on adaptation and learning has therefore become particularly important in governance models for environmental decision-making. Co-management institutions in the Arctic, for example, offer the potential to increase social learning and adaptive capacity in the face of uncertain environmental changes (Armitage et al. 2011). Hurlbert and Gupta (2016) differentiate between adaptive and anticipatory governance, where specific future scenarios are debated among stakeholders, prioritized, and then implemented. Structured decision-making is another method of social learning designed to guide groups through a step-by-step process not to reach consensus but to explore learning about different potential pathways (Johannson et al. 2018). It is now recognized that adaptive capacity and learning is a key element of environmental governance models that can enable complex decision-making and strengthen communities.

### 2.1.3 Rationales for environmental public participation

There are several rationales for the democratization of environmental decision-making identified in the literature. A summary of these different rationales for participation is included in Table 2.1 below. Scholars often focus on the normative arguments for public participation in environmental decision-making. As summarized by Reed (2008), normative rationales view environmental public participation as a democratic right, and focus on elements of process such as fairness and justice. Wesselink et al. (2011) describe normative participation as involving maximum participation to more equally distribute power and to ensure that everyone who holds a stake in decision-making has some influence over the process. Public participation processes are often constructed to address goals such as increased equity or empowerment (Diduck et al. 2015). George and Reed (2017) assert that for environmental decision-making to be truly sustainable, it must incorporate aspects of procedural justice and fairness in addition to addressing environmental and economic concerns.

Others argue for the pragmatic rationale that collaborative decision-making processes improve the quality of decisions made and increase acceptability of those decisions (Reed 2008). For example, Bierle (2002) examined 239 case studies of stakeholder engagement with regards to the environment, and found that in the majority of cases, stakeholder involvement led to higher-quality decisions as compared to the status quo. To operationalize higher quality

decisions, the study examined how stakeholder decisions led to improved cost-effectiveness, the incorporation of additional information and ideas from multiple stakeholders, mutual gains, and increased expertise brought to bear on decisions (2002). Wesselink et al. (2011) refer to this as a substantive rationale for public participation, where non-experts are able to see information that experts may miss, and therefore increase the quality of decisions.

Several scholars have noted a disconnect between idealized narratives of environmental public participation and the actual experiences of practitioners and agencies (Newig and Fritsch 2009; Wesselink et al. 2011; Conley and Moote 2003). The literature notes that both firms and governments can have alternate agendas for convening participatory governance beyond normative or pragmatic rationales. Parkins and colleagues (2016) revealed that industry and government used the model forest program as an avenue to advance market-based certification schemes and economic development. Manetti (2011) examined the quality of sustainability reporting on stakeholder engagement and found that firms often used engagement merely to legitimize their own decisions and placate stakeholder concerns. Similarly, Wesselink et al. (2011, 2691) found a notable presence of a legalistic rationale for public participation among environmental governance practitioners in the EU, where "participation is only organised to meet formal requirements" and there is little policy uptake of results from the participation process.

Citizen involvement in environmental decision-making has clearly become common practice for a range of normative and instrumental reasons described. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive empirical evidence that participatory approaches actually improve environmental outcomes (Koontz et al. 2019; Newig and Fritsch 2009; Reed 2008). The literature therefore raises substantial questions about the degree to which these processes improve outcomes and how they may do so.

**Table 2.1 Rationales for public participation**

| Rationale | Description |
|---|---|
| **Instrumental** | Legitimates and improves results; increases credibility with the public and diffuses conflicts, creates "ownership" of implementation |
| **Substantive** | Increases breadth and depth of information brought to bear on decisions, thereby improving decision quality |
| **Normative** | Allows those affected by a decision to participate in deliberation; aims to counteract power imbalances and provide inclusive processes |
| **Legalistic** | Procedural pressure induces the need for participation; participation of the public is a formality only |

(from Wesselink et al. 2011; including reference to Fiorino (1990); Blackstock and Richards (2007) and Stirling (2006; 2008))

## 2.2 Evaluating Environmental Public Participation

As collaborative processes have become more common in environmental decision-making, the need to assess these processes has been identified as a major avenue of research (Conley and Moote 2003; Koontz and Thomas 2006; Koontz et al. 2019). In spite of many arguments for the perceived benefits of participatory processes, there remain few empirical studies demonstrating the effectiveness of these processes in improving policy outcomes (Newig and Fritsch 2009). Newig and Fritsch (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 47 cases of participatory decision-making in North America and Western Europe to discover that while some variables, such as the environmental preferences of the actors involved in the process, may influence the quality of environmental decisions, others, such as social learning, had no correlation to improved policy effectiveness. A key question, therefore, is whether public participation efforts are indeed leading to improved environmental and social outcomes, or if they simply constitute a form of "rubberstamping" as Arnstein (1969, 218) suggests, where citizens are giving social license to decisions previously taken by those in power.

As noted by Chess (2000) and Pal (2014), there are many different forms of evaluation and the concept of evaluation itself is difficult to define. Pal (2014, 274) summarizes the field of evaluation as one that is "scientific, systematic, empirically oriented" towards producing information that can help improve programs or decision-making processes. Scholars acknowledge that evaluation is not an objective process. Conley and Moote (2003) recall that motivations for evaluation vary between different actors, and so the goals and criteria of an evaluation process will largely depend on who is conducting it. Pal (2014) also mentions that different actors may undertake evaluation for different political reasons, either to demonstrate their successes, or to highlight critiques of existing programs. Chess (2000) notes that evaluation of environmental public participation involves competing philosophies of participation as well as increasingly complex scientific information related to environmental problems, so that different ideologies and levels of scientific literacy further complicate the issue. Berkes (2010) agrees that environmental decisions are rarely evaluated solely on the basis of scientific evidence, and that often political, economic, and administrative considerations come into play.

In addition to many possible underlying goals and types of evaluation, there are multiple criteria that may be used when evaluating environmental public participation. Broadly speaking, the two types of evaluation criteria brought forward in the environmental participation literature

can be characterized as *process* and *outcome* criteria. Process evaluation examines how a public participation process is conducted, whereas outcome evaluation is concerned with the results of that process (Chess 2000). Diduck et al. (2015) remark that since there are so many possible reasons for conducting public participation, it is important that the goals of the process are taken into consideration within any evaluation that takes place.

Evaluations of environmental public participation processes have more frequently focused on process criteria (Koontz et al. 2019). As noted by Reed (2008), many process criteria are related to normative ideas about engaging stakeholders, such as evaluating whether these processes are fair, just, and include marginalized voices in decision-making. For example, George and Reed (2017) found that sustainability organizations engaging in stakeholder models of governance often reproduced norms of elitism and professionalism. The authors viewed this as a form of procedural injustice that prevents full participation in these organizations by a diverse range of actors. Diduck et al. (2015) also describe empowerment and equity as major goals in many public participation processes. These criteria are designed to assess the extent to which processes alleviate power imbalances in society and provide opportunities for the voices of non-expert citizens and underrepresented groups to be heard. Ansell and Gash (2008) reviewed 137 cases of collaboration to determine that building trust, face-to-face dialogue, and shared commitment were key factors for success. Other research has examined how consensus-building as a form of decision-making leads to relationship building and trust among participants, and whether this may in fact discourage deliberative debate (Reed 2008; Parkins 2010).

As well as elements of process, some research has analyzed the outcomes of environmental public participation processes. Outcome criteria can include socio-economic results such as increased trust, social learning, and community capacity, as well as environmental results like improved water quality or enhanced management techniques (Conley and Moote 2003). For example, Sinclair and colleagues (2008) found support for multiple forms of learning resulting from environmental assessment processes, including the potential for both individual and collective learning for sustainability. Egunyu et al. (2016) also found evidence of increased social learning in Community Forests, but noted that learning opportunities declined over time as communities became more specialized and professional in their approach to forest management.

Koontz et al. (2019) note that the empirical literature has focused more frequently on social outcomes of collaborative natural resource management than environmental impacts. It is

important to note that process and outcome criteria will certainly produce different evaluation results, and indeed, that outcomes may vary across social, economic, and environmental domains. For example, Reed et al. (2013) found that collaborative natural resource management processes in two national parks both produced positive outcomes according to environmental criteria, but that one case produced more positive social outcomes than the other, which may have actually depleted social capital stocks in the local area. Therefore, it must be clear which criteria are being used to assess the outcomes of collaborative processes, and for what purposes.

While many governments, agencies and firms are now seeking information about the outcomes of participatory processes, there are challenges associated with these evaluations. Multiple studies have noted the difficulties in assessing impacts from participatory processes for reasons including: limited data and scope of the research, inadequate time to conduct longitudinal studies, lack of control groups, and the inability to demonstrate causal chains from these processes (Koontz et al. 2019; Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau 2010; McKinley et al. 2017). Reed (2008) asserts that outcome evaluations have been less common than process evaluations partly due to the difficulty in selecting appropriate criteria and methods with which to assess outcomes. Diduck et al. (2015) relate that a major difficulty in determining whether participatory processes actually improve environmental outcomes is the lag time between these processes and any potential benefits. Pal (2014) refers to this as the attribution problem, as it can be difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate causal links between participation and improved environmental results. Different qualitative and quantitative methods at large and small scales should therefore be used to further examine the outcomes of these processes (Newig and Fritsch 2009).

Several conceptualizations of effectiveness in participatory processes have been identified in the literature. Beierle (2002) described effective stakeholder-based decisions as those which led to improved cost-effectiveness, mutual gains, the level of innovation and information available, or higher levels of expertise in decision-making. Conley and Moote (2003) suggested that evaluating a process against its own stated goals is one way to define effective processes, while Chess (2000) identified user-based evaluation as assessing outcomes against users' perceptions of the process. In a Canadian context, Beckley et al. (2005) define effective participatory processes as those that have a direct influence on decision making and improve the quality of decisions being made. The section below will review literature that has addressed evaluation of public participation within the Canadian forestry sector specifically.

## 2.3 Public Participation in the Canadian Forestry Sector

### 2.3.1 Forest Use and Management in Canada

Canada is a forest nation, with nearly 10% of the world's forests and an internationally recognized forestry industry (NRCan 2019b). In 2017, the forest sector contributed $24.6 billion (1.6%) to Canada's GDP and employed over 200,000 people (NRCan 2018). The vast majority, approximately 94%, of Canada's forest land is publicly owned and managed primarily by provincial governments (NRCan 2019a). Natural Resources Canada reports that a number of challenges for the forest sector over the past decade, including changes in market structure, trade disputes, and increased natural disturbances, have led the industry to look for opportunities to pursue new markets for forest products and low-carbon technologies such as biomass.

Rotherham and Armson (2016) describe the evolution of forest management models in Canada as changes in population, technology and society's needs have increased demands on forest resources. They detail the shift from Indigenous people living "in and with" the forest prior to settler contact, to the demand for timber for the pulp and paper industries, and the recent attention to the importance of non-timber forest resources and incorporating all users needs into forest management (2016, 388-9). Beckley et al. (2005) describe shifting forest values among Canadians, especially post-WWII as people began to value forests for recreational pursuits instead of simply economic livelihoods. Kramkowski and Mulvihill (2017) also note the recent trend towards "post-productivism" in forest-based communities with an increased focus on non-timber resources and diverse users as opposed to the domination of a single, industrialized forest.

Since the early 1990s, SFM has been the dominant forest management model utilized in Canada. Built on the commitments made by Canada and other countries at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 to engage in sustainable stewardship of forests, the SFM model includes consideration of social values as well as economic and environmental values (Bridge et al. 2005). A series of criteria and indicators for SFM was developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) as a result of Canada's participation in the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, otherwise known as the Montreal Process (Bridge et al. 2005). The Working Group has since published a revised set of criteria in 2015, which do not appear to have been taken up in Canada as of yet.

The SFM criteria (Figure 2.2) reflect values relevant for sustainable management of public forest resources, and the indicators allow for scientific assessment of the state of forests over time. One of these criteria is called "meeting society's responsibility" and emphasizes the need for management of collective forest resources to reflect public values, especially the values of local communities who are often rural and resource-dependent (CCFM 2006). Fair and effective decision-making is one of the core indicators of this criterion, alongside others such as incorporating Aboriginal ecological knowledge in forest management, and promoting community well-being and resilience (CCFM 2006). The other priority areas measure ecological and economic indicators for SFM. For example, biological diversity is assessed by indicators on the status of species at risk within the forest, and protected areas across ecozones. In this study, these criteria were viewed as one way to measure committees' progress towards advancing SFM.

Following the introduction of SFM, Canada adopted three major forest certifications and now has the largest area of independently certified forest in the world (NRCan 2019b). The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) SFM Standard, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) all provide reporting and certification frameworks for progress towards SFM. These certifications can help provide benefits to consumers looking to purchase sustainably managed forest products and also help forest companies provide proof of sustainable management practices. Certifications may also detail specific requirements for public input into forest management planning processes and engagement with Indigenous peoples.

Several provinces have also enacted legislation that addresses the issue of SFM and public participation. Provinces are responsible for developing forest laws, arranging licensing agreements with companies to harvest timber from public lands, and ensuring compliance with forest management planning laws and processes (NRCan 2019b). For example, in Ontario, the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* requires the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to oversee Local Citizen Committees (LCCs). LCCs are composed of multiple forest users such as trappers, tourism operators, fishers, and Indigenous communities, and are meant to provide public input on forest management planning (Hunt 2015). Together these committees, third-party certifications, and legislative mandates signify a larger commitment towards SFM and public values in forest decision-making more broadly. The next section will discuss the successes and challenges of participatory processes for SFM identified in the literature.

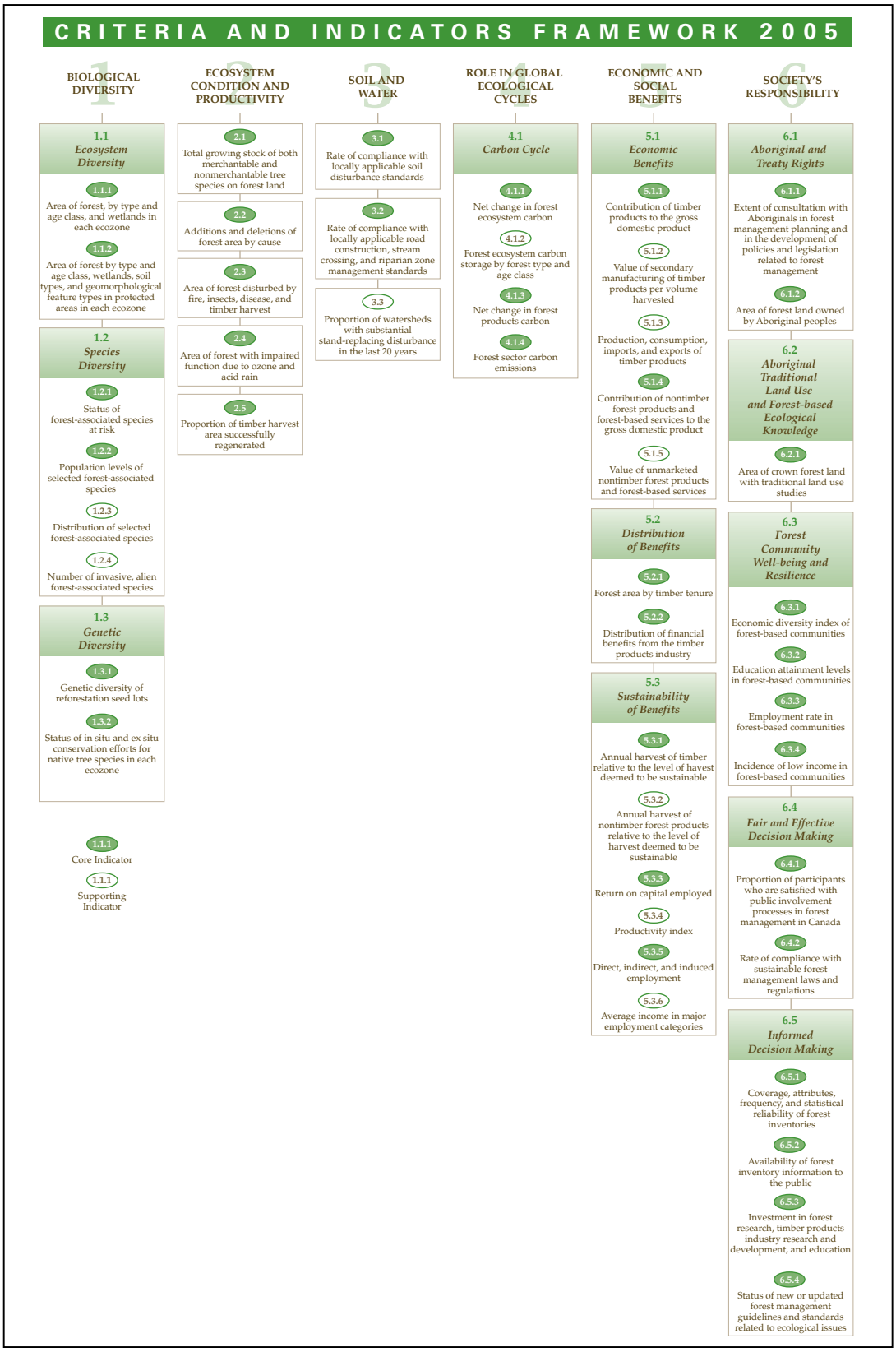


**Figure 2.2 Criteria and Indicators Framework for SFM (CCFM 2006)**

### 2.3.2 Public Participation in Canadian Forestry

The Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forestry Technology, Management and Training defines public participation as "various forms of direct public involvement where people, individually or through organized groups, can exchange information, express opinions and articulate interests, and have the potential to influence decisions or the outcome of specific forestry issues," (2000, 7). Public participation in forestry in Canada has taken the form of multiple methods such as public hearings, open houses, surveys, citizen advisory committees (Beckley et al. 2005).

Although no public registry of participatory or community forestry exists in Canada (Bullock and Lawler 2015), the most frequently used model of public participation in forest governance in Canada is advisory committees associated with a particular forest management area (Parkins et al. 2006). Forest companies conduct the vast majority of timber harvesting in Canada by receiving a license from the provincial government to operate on public land (NRCan 2019b). These licensees are sometimes mandated to have advisory committees or they may have established committees for other strategic or community purposes, such as achieving forest certification status.

Other governance structures also exist which necessitate community involvement or even shared land tenure. For example, *Community Forests* hold tenure on behalf of a local community or First Nation, and manage forest operations for the benefit of that community (Egunyu et al. 2016). Local forest management corporations (LFMCs) and other forms of enhanced forest licenses have emerged in Ontario as a type of tenure shared between municipal, Indigenous, and provincial governments (Zurba et al. 2016). *Model Forests*, on the other hand, do not have a specific land base, but are non-profit organizations focused on sharing and mobilizing knowledge on SFM among government, industry, and government partners (George and Reed 2017). The benefits of community and local forestry have been listed as increased participation for local peoples, greater economic benefits for the community, and accommodation of multiple forest uses (Teitelbaum 2014). However, these models account for a very small portion of Canada's commercial forests (Teitelbaum 2014).

A significant amount of research has been conducted on Forest Advisory Committees (FACs) across Canada, as these committees were established as a result of the need for public engagement processes as part of SFM. The term FACs can be interchangeable with Local Citizen

Committees, Public Advisory Groups, Citizen Advisory Committees, and in Québec, Table régionale de gestion intégrée des ressources et du territoire (TGIRT). Broadly speaking, these kinds of committees aim to engage local stakeholders in forest management and decision-making processes to increase the input of local values and knowledge in forest planning. Many committees were established in the late 1990s or early 2000s as a result of the SFM movement discussed above (Parkins et al. 2006). The decisions of FACs are rarely binding, and instead, the committees often function in a more advisory fashion, providing recommendations to provincial officials, forest planners, or forest company representatives (Parkins et al. 2006).

National-level surveys of FAC participants were conducted in 2004 and 2016 to investigate elements of member satisfaction, group processes and representation (Parkins et al. 2006; Lindgren et al. in press). These studies found relatively high levels of member satisfaction with FAC processes and procedures, although certain groups, such as Indigenous members and women, were significantly less satisfied with committee processes (Nenko et al. 2019a). Nenko and colleagues (2019b) also used survey data to show that high levels of member satisfaction and perceptions of effectiveness were closely linked.

Case studies have also examined elements of FAC processes, such as Hunt's (2015) study of local citizen committees in Ontario from 2001-2014, which found that participants generally held positive attitudes about the process. Robson and Rosenthal (2014) found that responsiveness of the lead agency was the strongest process factor relating to positive experiences of members on committees. Similarly, Parkins' (2010) study of Alberta FACs revealed high levels of familiarity and trust in some committees, while McGurk et al.'s research (2006) described some evidence of social benefits such as improved community well-being and more equitable decision-making in Manitoba FACs.

However, the evidence from FACs in Canada is clearly mixed, as several studies reveal shortcomings of the process and its outcomes. For example, Parkins and Davidson (2008) studied the level of corporate influence at committee meetings and found that company sponsors dominated discussion in some committees, allowing little time for deliberative debate. Miller and Nadeau (2017) cite a lack of substantive influence by citizens and poor implementation as factors leading to degraded trust in participation processes amongst forest-sector stakeholders in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia from 1999-2014. Interestingly, Parkins (2010) found that higher levels of trust may lead to lower quality of public discussion as members with high familiarity

were less inclined to vigorous debate and therefore less likely to uphold the public values of deliberative democracy. Complexity of the forest management process has also been critiqued as a major barrier for some members (Robson and Rosenthal 2014).

Issues of representation and diversity within FACs have also been identified as a major concern in the literature. Reed (2010) and Reed and Varghese (2007) found that women, Indigenous people, and people of lower socioeconomic status were underrepresented in FAC processes, and less likely to make substantive contributions when they were involved. Khanal (2018) demonstrated that levels of representation of women, Indigenous peoples, and youth remained consistently low on FACs in Canada between 2004-2016. Similarly, Nenko and colleagues (2019a) showed that Indigenous participants were less likely to be satisfied with committee processes, and less confident in their ability to contribute to FAC decision-making than non-Indigenous members.

Hunt (2015) discovered that LCCs in Ontario were male dominated and overrepresented by people aged 50-69, leading to a largely homogenous committee composition. Women and men were also observed to hold different perceptions of the process, and so women's underrepresentation may mean that the process is failing to incorporate all viewpoints in forest planning (Hunt 2015; Reed and Varghese 2007). Beyond gender, Parkins and Sinclair (2014) revealed trends of elitism within advisory committees that privileged members from professional affiliations. McGurk et al. (2006) also called for more meaningful involvement of marginalized groups, especially Indigenous people and those without previous connections to the state or forest companies, in FAC processes.

Addressing the question of effectiveness, previous research has investigated whether FACs have been effective in influencing some aspects of forest management planning and practice. National surveys of FAC participants showed that a majority of respondents said the process was effective (Parkins et al. 2006; Lindgren et al. in press). Participants named specific areas of policy or decision-making influenced by FACs such as input into SFM indicators and forest management planning, and negotiating access to forests for multiple users. However, these studies also cited concerns by participants that the committees were not taken seriously by policy and decision-makers at the government and committee sponsor level. These concerns were echoed by other forest-sector research in Canada that revealed a lack of autonomy and influence by participants on decisions in both FACs and Model Forests (Bullock et al. 2017; Miller and

Nadeau 2017). These studies evaluated effectiveness largely from the perspective of participants, and often focused on elements of participant satisfaction and perceptions (Hunt 2015). As noted by Chess (2000) and Wesselink et al. (2011), agency and practitioners' goals and perceptions should be evaluated in addition to those of stakeholders and participants in order to gain a fuller understanding of the effectiveness of these processes. Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau (2010) remarked that research is needed to extend understanding beyond participant satisfaction, and explore the perceptions of different types of actors in participatory processes.

### 2.3.3 Research Gap

Given the prominence of participatory and collaborative processes in environmental decision-making in sectors such as forestry, the need to assess the success of these efforts is considerable. Following the introduction of SFM and a range of certification programs requiring participatory processes, the FAC model was adopted widely across Canada, and FACs have been established in all provinces except PEI over the past two decades (Parkins et al. 2006). A significant body of research has analyzed these committees, with particular attention paid to aspects of committee processes such as satisfaction, representation, and social outcomes (e.g., Hunt 2015; Reed and Varghese 2007; McGurk et al. 2006). However, less is known about the effectiveness of FACs on SFM policy and decision-making outcomes, particularly from the perspective of the forest companies or provincial agencies that sponsor these committees. Given the concerns raised in the literature about the lack of substantive influence held by FACs (Miller and Nadeau 2017; Parkins and Davidson 2008), it is important to consider whether FACs in Canada have become what Arnstein (1969, 216) refers to as an "empty ritual" with little policy uptake, or whether there is evidence of genuine effectiveness in terms of their influence over SFM. My thesis addresses this gap by examining the views of committee sponsors, including government agencies and forest companies, about the effectiveness of FAC processes, and exploring how these committees influence outcomes in support of SFM policy and practice.

CHAPTER THREE

# 3.0 METHODS

## 3.1 Research Design

This research followed a mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative data in a sequential explanatory strategy (Creswell 2009). This study built on quantitative survey data collected in 2016 by collecting and analyzing qualitative data through a case study approach. The rationale for choosing a mixed methods design is that this research aimed at expanding on and explaining the previous data set on FACs that was collected in 2016. The data from this survey revealed continuing concerns about the influence and effectiveness of committees over time, especially when compared with similar results from a 2004 survey of committee members (Parkins et al. 2006). The survey data was therefore the original impetus for the overarching research question about the effectiveness of committees. While I was not involved in the design or administration of the 2016 survey, I was given the task of leading the analysis and reporting of this data, which was used to inform the selection of committees for qualitative study in hopes of gaining further understanding of this issue. Survey results were also used to compare responses from members with information gathered from sponsors and members in this study.

My project fits Creswell's (2009) description of a sequential explanatory strategy in which one type of data are collected in order to better explain the results of previous data collection and analysis. Yin (2014) considers case study as a useful way to answer these 'how' and 'why' questions. According to Creswell (2009), timing, weighting, and mixing of data are important factors to consider in mixed methods design. This study is weighted towards the qualitative data collected, with the quantitative data providing a supportive role. Creswell (2009) suggests this is one of the typical mixed methods approaches to research design, and that one form of data (in this case, quantitative) may inform the collection and interpretation of another.

In "mixing" the data, this study viewed the two phases of data collection as connected, rather than fully integrated, where the first phase of quantitative data collection and analysis informed the selection of participants for follow-up with qualitative data collection. Survey data was also helpful in constructing relevant interview questions, such as asking interviewees to rate the effectiveness and influence of their committee, and in comparing responses between the

survey and interviews. While no new quantitative data was collected as a part of this thesis, the results and analysis of the 2016 survey supplement the discussion of the qualitative information, particularly in Chapter Six. A mixed methods design allowed for flexibility as one stage of the research informed the next, and provided for the use of a variety of data collection methods (see Table 3.1) including the survey, interviews, and document review (Creswell 2009).

The first stage of the research design was a review of the 2016 survey data. Key questions from the survey were selected to determine committees that had scored highly on questions pertaining to effectiveness, particularly with respect to their level of influence on decision-making and the efforts of the committee sponsor. Selecting committees where members reported high levels of effectiveness on these measures offered the opportunity to find evidence of influence on outcomes and responsiveness by the committee sponsor. This subset of committees was identified. Telephone interviews were conducted with the committee sponsors to achieve a general understanding of committee effectiveness as perceived by sponsors. Additional telephone interviews were conducted with a select number of forest practitioners including independent forest auditors, consultants, forest certification bodies, and academics.

Next, I selected two committees for case study, with the committee sponsors acting as a subunit of analysis "embedded" within the larger context of each committee (Yin 2014). This allowed me to analyze different elements of each committee such as its legislative environment, structure, and membership composition, as well as the perspectives of committee sponsors. A case study design also meant I had the ability to rely on multiple forms of data collection such as interviews, a review of committee documents, observations, and previous survey data collected in 2004 and 2016.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Data Collection Methods**

| **Method** | **Data Source** | # |
|---|---|---|
| *Survey* | Online survey responses from members | 343 |
| | Online survey responses from chairpersons | 66 |
| *Interviews* | Forest Industry | 11 |
| | Government | 6 |
| | Forestry practitioners<br>(auditors, consultants, certifying bodies, academics) | 7 |
| | Members | 9 |
| | **Total Interviews** | **33** |
| *Document Review* | Terms of Reference (3), Issue Tracking documents (16), Member Surveys (8), Historical reports/workplans (3), Correspondence/press releases (6) | 36 |
| *Observation* | Attended meetings of 2 case study committees | |

Yin (2014) notes that while case study research does not empirically test causal explanations for phenomenon, it can provide a level of depth and insight into the "how" and "why" of social processes and outcomes that is not addressed by other methods. This approach complements previous large-scale quantitative research of FAC participants conducted in 2004 and 2016 (Parkins et al. 2006; Nenko et al. 2019b), and allows for further insights into the effectiveness of the committees. A mixed methods design, with emphasis on the qualitative case study phase of data collection and analysis, is well-suited to address the question of effectiveness within committees by collecting many forms of relevant data and combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis to best answer the overall research question (Creswell 2009).

### 3.2 Philosophical Worldview

I situated this mixed methods approach within the frameworks of pragmatism and interpretivism. This study took a pragmatic approach following the assertion that "what is useful is true," and that the knowledge generated by this research should be based on real-world practice of FACs (Patton 2015, 681). In accordance with Creswell and Poth (2018), a pragmatic framework means that I used both quantitative and qualitative data in hopes of achieving the best answer for my research questions. This worldview aligns well with the typical mixed methods study aimed at collecting a variety of types of data in order to provide the best understanding possible of a research problem (Creswell 2009). Yin (2014) also mentions that case study research can be closely linked with a pragmatic approach and evaluation, meaning that this research design is well suited to evaluate the effectiveness of FACs.

I also identified with an interpretivist framework for this research because the focus of the study was on sponsors' and members' perceptions of effectiveness. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) state that in a postpositivist, or interpretivist, framework, reality is perceived through our subjective experiences, and these perceptions will influence what we know as truth. Each sponsor and member I spoke to has had different experiences within their FAC, and so their perception of the level of effectiveness in general has been influenced by these experiences. In interpreting these perceptions, I attempted to negotiate a balance between honouring the distinct realities perceived by participants and drawing broader conclusions across cases.

## 3.3 Data Collection

As is common for organizational case studies (Yin 2014), although the comparative units of analysis for this study were the larger committees themselves, units of data collection include the sponsors and members of the committees as individuals, documents, and the committee meetings and sites for observation. Each data collection method is addressed in turn below.

### 3.3.1 2016 Survey Data

Survey data were used to screen candidate FACs for the research using a two-phase approach. As described by Yin (2014), a two-phase approach collects quantitative data about the pool of candidates and then applies screening criteria to produce a list of potential candidates for further study. The screening criteria applied in this study was a maximum positive rating (5/5) on questions focused on influencing outcomes for forest management and having a positive relationship with the committee sponsor (Table 3.2). Emphasis was placed on outcome criteria for effectiveness (e.g. "Our recommendations have guided forest managers") rather than elements of process such as member satisfaction or perceived levels of fairness on the committee, in hopes of selecting committees where both process and outcome elements of effectiveness could be found.

Committees where respondents rated the maximum level of agreement or satisfaction with these questions ("5 – strongly agree" or "5 – very satisfied") were shortlisted. A shortlist was created of approximately 21 sponsors from 14 committees that scored highly on effectiveness to contact for the qualitative portion of the study (Table 3.3). In some cases, the exact number of individuals regarded as "sponsors" was unclear. For example, in the case of some government-sponsored committees more than one government contact was listed online in relation to a particular committee.

Government-sponsored committees were more likely to be found in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec than in other jurisdictions. The shortlist of committees I produced was fairly balanced in terms of region and type of sponsor, either government or industry, even though these criteria were not used as part of the selection. This allowed for some degree of variation and purposeful selection of committees (Creswell and Poth 2018) including many regions across Canada and both government and industry-sponsored committees. The contact list from the 2016 survey was used as a starting point for contacting committees and obtaining sponsors' contact information for the telephone interviews.

**Table 3.2 2016 Survey questions used to identify shortlisted committees.**

| **Key Questions** |
|---|
| Q16-15 I think forests are managed better because of the existence of the committee. |
| Q16-17 Our recommendations have guided forest managers. |
| Q22-7 In summary, we would like to know how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following aspects of the committee's work: The efforts of the committee's sponsor. |
| **Additional questions considered** |
| Q16-4 Regarding the committee's activities, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. The process is effective |
| Q16-6 I am able to influence the decisions that are made by the committee |
| Q17 List the one or two areas of forest management decision-making or policy that the committee has been effective in influencing, and the reasons why. |
| Q19-3 Regarding the quality and extent of committee discussions and deliberations, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Controversial issues receive genuine attention and a sufficient response by the committee sponsor(s) (3) |
| Q21A Please state below what you believe could be done to improve the effectiveness of the committee. |

**Table 3.3 Shortlist of Committees Based on Analysis of Survey Results**

| **SurveyID** | **Committee Name** |
|---|---|
| AB001 | Sundre Forest Products Public Involvement Round Table |
| AB005 | Hinton Forest Resources Advisory Group (FRAG) |
| AB007 | Alberta Pacific Forest Industries, Forest Landscape Advisory Group |
| BC002 | Fort St John Pilot Project Regulation Public Advisory Group |
| BC005 | Stillwater CSA Community Advisory Group |
| MB001 | Louisiana-Pacific Canada Limited - Stakeholders Advisory Committee |
| NB003 | Acadian TimberTobique Forest Advisory Committee |
| NF&L001 | Public Advisory Committee Corner Brook NL |
| ON003 | Temagami L.C.C. |
| ON006 | Sudbury Local Citizens Committee |
| ON010 | Spanish Forest LCC Committee |
| ON018 | Black Spruce Forest Local Citizens Committee |
| QCAC014/ | Table de gestion intégrée des ressources et du territoire Saguenay/Lac-Saint-Jean |
| SK001 | Mistik Management Public Advisory Group |

### 3.3.2 Telephone Interviews

Committee sponsors on the shortlist were contacted by email to invite their participation in a telephone interview. A majority of sponsors of the shortlisted committees (10/14) responded positively to this request and agreed to participate in the research. I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with committee sponsors during the summer of 2018. The telephone interviews lasted between 30 - 75 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed by me.

**Table 3.4 Interview Participants**

| Survey ID | Committee | Role/Sector |
|---|---|---|
| AB | Hinton, Edson, Whitecourt FACs | Academic |
| AB001 | Sundre Forest Products Public Involvement Round Table (SPIRT) | Industry Sponsor |
| AB005 | Hinton Forest Resources Advisory Group (FRAG) | Industry Sponsor |
| | | Municipal Government |
| | | First Nations |
| | | ATV Association |
| | | Parks organization |
| | | Provincial Government |
| | | Chamber of Commerce |
| | | Research Organization |
| AB007 | Al-Pac Forest Landscape Advisory Group | Industry Sponsor |
| BC | CSA & SFI committees | Third-party auditor |
| BC002 | Fort St John Pilot Project Public Advisory Group | Government Sponsor |
| | | Industry Sponsor |
| | | Industry Sponsor |
| Canada | Director of Standards, SFI | Certification body |
| | SFI | Certification body |
| | Director of Standards, FSC | Certification body |
| MB001 | Louisiana-Pacific Stakeholders Advisory Committee | Industry Sponsor |
| ON003 | Temagami Local Citizens Committee | Industry Sponsor |
| ON006 | Sudbury Local Citizens Committee | Government Sponsor |
| | | Industry Sponsor |
| | | Member |
| ON010 | Spanish Forest Local Citizens Committee | Government Sponsor |
| | | Industry Sponsor |
| ON018 | Black Spruce Forest Local Citizens Committee | Government Sponsor |
| | | Industry Sponsor |
| QC | Professeur de politique forestière et d'évaluation environnementale | Academic |
| QC21 | TGIRT Outaouais | Consultant |
| SK001 | Mistik Management Public Advisory Group | Industry Sponsor |
| | | Pulp mill certification coordinator |
| | | Provincial government |
| | | Environmental NGO |

An additional seven interviews were conducted with forestry practitioners suggested to me by other interviewees through snowball sampling. These practitioners held knowledge relevant to the research topic and included: 2 academics, 1 independent forest auditor, 3 individuals working for forest certification programs (FSC & SFI), and 1 forestry consultant. These interviews supplemented my understanding of the effectiveness of FACs and in some cases provided insights into regional or national perspectives on forest management. For example, I was not able to reach the committee sponsor for the TGIRT Saguenay/Lac-Saint-Jean, perhaps in part due to language barriers. Instead, I completed two interviews with individuals within Quebec who had experience consulting and working with tables to get their perspectives on effectiveness.

Sponsors and practitioners were asked about their perceptions of the effectiveness of FACs as well as any policies or decisions that have been influenced by FAC deliberations. Some questions replicated topics from the 2016 survey, such as asking sponsors to rate the effectiveness and influence of their committee, and to identify issues the committee had influenced over the past three years. Participants were also asked to provide any relevant documents such as meeting minutes or forest management plans, that might be useful in assessing the effectiveness of the committees. These interviews also asked sponsors if they and their committee would be interested in participating in follow-up research in the form of site visits and personal interviews.

### 3.3.3 Case Studies

Following the telephone interviews, two committees were selected for further study. Yin (2014) suggests selecting similar cases with exemplary outcomes as a simple method of employing literal replication to strengthen the robustness of case study results. I selected two committees that scored highly on effectiveness measures along with practical considerations to act as exemplar cases. These were the Mistik Management Public Advisory Group (PAG) based in Meadow Lake, SK and the Hinton Wood Products Forest Resources Advisory Group (FRAG) based in Hinton, AB (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2). I used three of the main methods of data collection listed by Yin (2014) for case study: interviews, documentation, and observations. The principle of collecting multiple sources of evidence increases the reliability of the findings from this study, and helps support triangulation of the data (Yin 2014).

The selection criteria for these cases included: sponsors rated the committee highly on effectiveness (5/5) during the telephone interview, sponsors mentioned an example of the committee's influence on a concrete outcome during the telephone interview, sponsors worked with similar forest management planning frameworks (e.g. VOITs), and sponsors had similar contexts of strong ties to partnering organizations in the community. Practical considerations for case selection included: sponsor provided additional documents in relation to the committee and an invitation to committee meetings, sponsor facilitated contacts with members for follow-up interviews, and the committee's proximity to Saskatoon and feasibility of travel.

**Box 3.1 Mistik Management Public Advisory Group (PAG) – Meadow Lake, SK**

The Forest Management License Agreement held by Mistik Management sits on or near traditional territories of nine First Nations in northern Saskatchewan. These Nations comprise the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, which has had a stake in forest management in the area since it purchased part of an abandoned mill from the provincial government in 1988 (Wyatt and Dumoe 2018). Mistik Management was formed in 1989 as a not-for-profit venture to bring wood to the mill, among other responsibilities. Currently, the company is jointly owned by NorSask Forest Products, which is itself owned by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, and Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp, owned by the Paper Excellence group.

Following protests through a road blockade set up by local people in Canoe Lake 1992, Mistik established co-management boards with surrounding First Nations to ensure their participation in forestry activities. The Public Advisory Group was created in 2004 as a way to facilitate participation from both Indigenous rightsholders and non-Indigenous stakeholders.

The PAG has nearly 70 members on its membership list, and frequently gets attendance by 40+ members at meetings. Meetings are held twice per year, and are usually a full day meeting followed by a field trip on the second day where members can experience some aspect of forest management in person. Mistik provides extensive resources for members to attend in support of the long distances northern communities need to travel to attend.

Mistik's PAG has strong connections to the certification programs. In 2007, Mistik became the first forestry company in Saskatchewan to be FSC-certified. They have also participated in updates to the CSA SFM standard and are actively pursuing partnerships with neighbouring FMAs in Alberta and environmental organizations like Ducks Unlimited Canada to protect intact forest landscapes.

**Box 3.2 Hinton Wood Products Forest Resources Advisory Group (FRAG) – Hinton, AB**

The Hinton forest has been under active management since 1955 and currently belongs to West Fraser Mills, the largest lumber manufacturer in the world. When it was formed in 1989, the Hinton FRAG was Alberta's first public advisory committee in forestry. There are still some original members remaining on the group according to the committee's organizer, though these individuals are getting older and leaving the committee or dying.

The FRAG meets every other month over the fall and winter months (approximately six times a year) and has about twenty active members. Membership consists of local county and town government representatives, Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, recreational organizations (ATV, Fish and Game Association, etc.), conservation groups (birding club, Friends of the Park), industry groups (steel and coal workers), and the Chamber of Commerce.


West Fraser Mills lumber ready to be shipped
Photo: Amanda Lindgren

The Town of Hinton supports diversified industries such as oil and gas, mining, and has two neighbouring Forest Management Areas (Hinton and Edson). West Fraser is the Town's largest employer, providing about 700 jobs to the area. As such, members are generally supportive of the forest industry and there has been limited conflict on the group in recent years.

FRAG also has strong connections with the Foothills Research Institute (fRI), formerly the Foothills Model Forest, of which Hinton Wood Products was a founding sponsor. The fRI provides a strong research agenda for the Hinton FMA and continuous expertise on the latest forest management issues and techniques.

*Document Analysis*

Document analysis in case study research allows for triangulation of data with other sources of evidence, and to provide context about the case the participants are working in (Bowen 2009). Documents such as non-technical literature, correspondence or meeting minutes can be analyzed for themes, provide historical information about the cases, and suggest questions that should explored further with participants (Bowen 2009). In this study, I paid particular attention to the intended audience of the documents and tried to analyze documents critically. As Bowen (2009) notes, documents are produced by authors for specific purposes, and it may be important to note what is left out of documents as much as what is included in them.

I reviewed documents a total of 36 documents obtained from telephone and personal interviews, as well as other relevant documents that were accessible online (Table 3.5). Document review occurred before and after interviews as documents become available. These documents helped provide context about committees and in some cases helped reveal particular topics that were investigated further in the personal interviews.

**Table 3.5 List of Documents Reviewed**

| **Document Type** | **Hinton FRAG** | **Mistik PAG** | **Other** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Issue Tracking Documents | 16 | | |
| Member Satisfaction Surveys | 7 | 1 | |
| Terms of Reference | 1 | | 2 |
| Historical Report | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Workplan (Mountain Pine Beetle) | 1 | | |
| Meeting Minutes | | 1 | |
| News Releases | | 2 | |
| Correspondence | | | 2 |
| Total | 26 | 5 | 5 |
| **Grand Total** | **36** | | |

*Personal Interviews*

I conducted additional 10 interviews with members of the case study committees. The goal for these interviews was to ensure a semi-structured, conversational tone while keeping my interview protocol in mind (Appendix C). Questions for the personal interviews were also personalized to each case and informed by the findings of the telephone interviews. At this stage of the research, questions focused on corroborating themes that emerged from document review and the telephone interviews. I also particularly appreciated Creswell and Poth's (2018, 166) advice that "a good interviewer is a good listener rather than a frequent speaker." In many cases,

these interviews provided depth of context and local perspective on issues raised by sponsors in the initial phone interview. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by me as well.

*Observation*

Observation is an important method of data collection in case study research to help reflect the real-world setting of cases (Yin 2014). Kawulich (2005) also notes that observation can be used as a method of improving the validity, or trustworthiness, of a study by allowing researchers to check participants' statements against their observations in reality. To fulfill this method, I attended one committee meeting at each case study site in fall 2018. I also collected observations during my visits to the offices where sponsors work, and site tours in the case of the Hinton FMA. I made informal field notes about my observations including my own reflections on the meetings (Creswell and Poth 2018). I was particularly interested in group dynamics of the decision-making process in terms of how individuals were interacting, whether outcomes were being reached within the committee, and how the sponsor was participating at the meetings. Importantly, these visits allowed me to make contacts to follow up with for interviews and to have informal conversations with participants about their views on the FAC process.

## 3.4 Data Analysis

### 3.4.1 Analysis Strategy

Yin (2014) advises that in the initial stages of data analysis, the researcher should remain open to any ideas and themes emerging from the data. Following this recommendation, I took notes with my initial interpretations of data as it was being collected. This was helpful for establishing an "audit trail" of my study and tracking ideas for analysis over time (Creswell and Poth 2018). Yin (2014) also advises spending some time "playing" with the data to see if any interesting or unexpected patterns are revealed before undertaking a more formal analysis strategy. I attempted to keep this advice in mind during data analysis and remained open to emerging themes throughout.

Transcribing interviews myself gave me an opportunity to form some preliminary interpretations of the data (Gibbs 2007). In transcribing interviews, I was most interested in the content of the interviews rather than an analysis of the deeper discourse, and so I produced verbatim level clean transcripts (Gibbs 2007). I followed Bazeley and Jackson's (2013) advice for preparing transcripts using appropriate headings and word processing standards.

Beyond this initial phase of data analysis, I applied both deductive and inductive general data analysis strategies suggested by Yin (2014). This study was particularly interested in committees' influence on decision-making, so I distinguished codes between process and outcome criteria for effectiveness to better understand how effectiveness was related to influence in the minds of participants. Outcome codes were those that suggested a committee's ability to influence and/or improve decision-making (Beckley et al. 2005), and involved interpretation of the data as either influencing or improving outcomes in some way. Process codes related to procedural elements of the committee, such as ensuring adequate attendance, representation, and facilitation during the meeting. This deductive strategy is important because the proposition that the committees have or have not been effective in influencing decision-making forms the basis for the overall research question and literature review. Appendix E includes a full list of codes and references.

I also coded deductively for two types of outcomes from FAC processes. First, I used the CCFM (2006) criteria and indicators framework to identify outcomes or themes related to Sustainable Forest Management. For example, concerns about moose habitat being impacted by forestry would be coded to the "biological diversity" priority for SFM, according to the CCFM indicator regarding forest-associated species diversity. Second, following from Margerum's (2008) typology of collaborative processes and their impacts, I also looked for outcomes at different levels of impact, such as in the forest management planning process, operationally, and impacts on corporate culture of the committee sponsor.

I also followed an inductive strategy in which themes and explanations emerged directly from the data, or "from the ground up," (Yin 2014, 137). This strategy of analysis is particularly helpful for explanatory or evaluative case studies in which the data collected covers the outcomes or phenomenon the researcher is seeking to explain (Yin 2014). My analysis focused on the explanations of committee effectiveness offered by the data and looked for matching patterns across multiple cases, or committees. Though I applied the criteria for effectiveness specified above, my analysis was also open to alternate definitions of effectiveness that emerged from the data, and I aimed to synthesize these findings across cases.

Survey data complemented the interpretation of qualitative analysis, particularly for reinforcing results that were similar between interviews and the survey. For example, comments made by interviewees regarding the value of longstanding membership and member knowledge

were supported by survey data suggesting that the average age and length of membership on FACs had risen nationally from 2004-2016. A more detailed description of the survey results and analysis of specific topics can be found in other published work (Lindgren et al. in press; and Khanal 2018; Nenko et al. 2019a; Nenko et al. 2019b).

### 3.4.2 Data Analysis Tools

I used NVivo 12 qualitative data anlysis software for data analysis. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) note the difference between "cases" within the methodology of case study research and cases used as units of analysis in NVivo. For example, individual participants and committees were both considered "cases" for the purposes of organizing data in NVivo. I also assigned attributes to each case such as region or province, committee name, certification type (e.g. FSC, SFI, CSA), and sector (NGO, industry, government, etc.).

Coding took place in several phases, following Saldaña's (2016) advice that coding is a cyclical process involving multiple stages. The initial coding phase was descriptive, assigning initial impressions to the data and subsequent phases of coding looked for patterns, similarities, differences, and explanatory codes across cases. I also developed a codebook (Appendix E) as suggested by Saldaña (2016), including examples of codes and their descriptions.

## 3.5 Validity

Like much qualitative research, this research does not adopt a strictly positivistic view of validity, and is focused more on demonstrating the trustworthiness of the findings of the study (Creswell and Poth 2018). Creswell (2009) advises researchers to select several strategies for checking the accuracy of findings in mixed methods studies and making the reader aware of these efforts. I used triangulation through multiple forms of evidence as one of the main validation strategies for my research. Both mixed methods and case study methodologies allow for collecting multiple forms of data including both quantitative and qualitative data, so I had opportunities to corroborate evidence. Part of this process involves reporting negative evidence that does not agree with the rest of my findings, and exploring plausible or rival explanations to the main assertions of the study in sufficient detail (Yin 2014).

While I did not participate in an external audit, I attempted to create an audit trail through documenting the steps that were taken and rationale for decisions along the way (Creswell 2009). I also aimed to practice researcher reflexivity in the writing up of my research results with thick, rich descriptions of my cases that allow readers to discern the transferability of my case studies

(Creswell and Poth 2018). I looked to Yin's (2014) criteria for an excellent case study, including clearly defined case boundaries, a strong rationale for cases, and providing sufficient evidence so that the reader can judge the merits of the study. I also identify with Patton (2015)'s criteria for good research, including research that is relevant to real world practice, and actionable findings that can support practitioners with easily extractable lessons.

### 3.6 Ethics

This study was submitted to the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board for approval. Consent forms were used for both the telephone and personal interviews to ensure participants were informed about their participation in this study (Appendix B). Although the risks to participants participating in this research were minimal, there may have been potential issues when interviewing participants in their workplace setting, particularly for government officials who were reluctant to speak candidly about their experiences. As well, the names of the two case study committees have been used, with discretion. To address this issue, I assured participants that their individual confidentiality would be protected throughout data collection, analysis, and storage, and that no identifying features from their interviews would be reported. I omitted the names of all other specific committees, companies, and forest management areas.

I ensured participants had ample opportunity to review the contents of their interview transcript if they wished to do so and emphasized their right to alter or delete any comments they were uncomfortable with me using in the research. I also approached participants with an open and neutral stance, while acknowledging my own biases in conducting interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) note that building rapport with gatekeepers can be especially important in case studies, and that an important role for the researcher is to be open and honest about their activities as well as any possible benefits for the case study site.

### 3.7 Limitations

This research is limited in its ability to make inferences about all FACs in Canada because of its small sample size and non-random sample for telephone interviews. A wide range of cases is considered to provide the most robust evidence for case study research (Yin 2014), and it would be ideal to be able to examine cases from each province, or to examine cases with a variety of characteristics such as older and newer committees. However, it is impractical within the timeframe of a Masters project to undertake research on this large of a scale.

As well, there are potential limitations with respect to interview research. Government or industry representatives may have been reluctant to share information with me when acting in their official positions. This study is targeted towards effective committees, and so the perspectives of sponsors and members who are less satisfied with FAC processes is likely underrepresented. Telephone interviews present their own limitations, as I was unable to read participants' body language and develop in-person rapport with interviewees (Lechuga 2012). I have tried to keep these limitations in mind while analyzing and reporting my findings through a critical lens. The next chapter presents results from the interviews related to perceptions of committee effectiveness, supported by evidence gathered from documents and site visits.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## 4.0 UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAC PROCESSES

This chapter presents results related to the first research objective, which was to characterize effectiveness for FACs as it relates to process and outcomes. These results also inform the fourth objective to make recommendations on improving committee effectiveness. Previous research, including nation-wide surveys conducted in 2004 and 2016, has investigated participants' views on whether committees were being effective or not, but did not ask participants to define or explain what is meant by effectiveness for their committee (Parkins et al. 2006). This chapter seeks to provide a better understanding of what effectiveness meant for FACs by presenting data from interviews with committee sponsors, members, and forestry practitioners. As this study was particularly interested in the degree of influence committees had on outcomes, analysis investigated whether sponsors and members related the concept of effectiveness to process and/or outcome criteria. Process criteria emerged as overwhelmingly important to all participants, and so this chapter focuses on various elements of process relating to members, sponsors, and shared responsibilities. Results relating to outcome criteria for effectiveness are presented in Chapter Five. Limitations on committee effectiveness are also presented, as well as interviewees' suggestions on how to improve committee processes. Where relevant, results specific to the two case study committees are presented in detail.

### 4.1 Perceptions of Effectiveness

During interviews, sponsors were asked to rate how effective they felt their committee was on a scale of 1-5, where 1 was very ineffective and 5 was very effective. Of the 16 sponsors who provided a numerical score, the average was 4.38 (87.6%), suggesting that most sponsors felt their committees were quite effective. In fact, 7 out of 16 sponsors rated their own committee 5/5, or "very effective". One typical explanation for a high effectiveness ratings was as follows:

> *I guess for our purposes the PAG is working very well. We do surveys all the time. And I just hate to give straight across the board a 5/5 but for our purposes we feel the PAG is completely effective so I would have to say it's as close to a 5 as we could possibly come. (SI05, industry sponsor)*

### 4.1.1 Level of Influence of FACs

Sponsors were also asked to give a rating of how influential they felt their committee was on decisions about forest management. For the fifteen sponsors who gave a numerical score, the average rating was 3.48 on a scale of 1-5 where 1 was not influential at all and 5 was very influential. Sponsors had a range of reasons for giving ratings as low as 2 and as high as 5. Some sponsors then explained that they felt their groups' level of influence was fairly high, giving their committee a rating of at least 4/5:

> *So we have to listen to them. They're not an advocacy group. They're not a watchdog. They're mandated through legislation. (SG02, government sponsor)*

> *Well, I think they're influential because they have our attention… It's something we don't get often out of the group to be quite honest. But when they do give us advice we take it very seriously and we do pay attention. (SI11, industry sponsor)*

Other sponsors gave their committee a rating of 2.5 or 3 and described reasons why their influence might be limited, either through other actors in the forest management process or by the nature of issues being discussed:

> *I would say probably in the three range, maybe even two and a half. We're not going to stop because they don't think it's okay. Right? (SG15, government sponsor)*

> *If they don't understand the technical workings of the provincial policy and the issue is focused on something like that they'll have less influence. If it's about recreation and roads and things that are more on the ground… then their influence could be higher on the decision-making. (SI03, industry sponsor)*

Following these ratings, sponsors were asked to describe the types of criteria they would use to determine the effectiveness of the committee. The responses to this question, and other relevant responses from members and practitioners, form the basis for the criteria discussed in the sections below.

### 4.1.2 Process and outcome criteria

This study investigated whether interviewees considered elements of process and/or outcome criteria to be most important for committee effectiveness. Researchers argue that process criteria for effectiveness include both practical considerations such as adequate time and resources, as well as more intangible elements of process like respect and trust (e.g. Beckley et al. 2005; Conley and Moote 2003). Outcome criteria are typically concerned with whether committees have an impact on substantive results from the public participation process, such as decisions about forest management, operating procedures, or other outcomes like impacting the corporate culture of the committee sponsor (Koontz et al. 2006; Margerum 2008).

When interviewees were asked how they evaluated the effectiveness of their own FAC, process elements were mentioned more frequently than outcomes (Table 4.1). Process criteria were included in 30 participants' definitions of effectiveness, while outcome criteria were included in 18 responses about how respondents measure effectiveness on their committee. Sponsors' responses were most concerned with process, while members and practitioners more frequently included elements of influencing and improving outcomes in their responses. Interviewees usually mentioned outcome criteria only once, while they may have mentioned several different elements of process. Perceptions of influence on outcomes are discussed further in Chapter Five.


**Figure 4.1 Top process criteria listed by interviewees, by frequency**

**Table 4.1 Process vs. Outcome Criteria Identified by Participants**

| | Total | Sponsor | Member | Practitioner |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *# Interviewees* | *33* | *17* | *9* | *7* |
| *Process Criteria Mentioned* | | | | |
| Responsiveness | 24 | 10 | 9 | 5 |
| Governance | 23 | 14 | 5 | 4 |
| Enduring Membership | 21 | 15 | 4 | 2 |
| Member Knowledge | 21 | 13 | 4 | 4 |
| Representation | 21 | 13 | 4 | 4 |
| Satisfaction | 18 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| Member Support | 17 | 9 | 4 | 4 |
| Attendance | 16 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| Public Participation | 16 | 10 | 4 | 2 |
| Facilitation | 16 | 9 | 3 | 4 |
| Professionalism | 15 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| Smoothness of process | 14 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| Turnover | 13 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| Field trip | 13 | 8 | 3 | 2 |
| Relationship-building | 11 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Trust | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Consensus building | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| **Process** | **30** | **17** | **8** | **5** |
| **Outcome** | **18** | **6** | **6** | **6** |

The process criteria most frequently mentioned by all groups of participants were: responsiveness (24), governance (23), enduring membership (21), member knowledge (21) and representation (21) (Figure 4.1). Sponsors were most focused on having a successful process, with every sponsor interviewed (17) mentioning some form of process criteria such as attendance or representation in their definition of effectiveness. Less than half of sponsors (6) responded that having an influence on outcomes was considered a criterion for effectiveness. One committee sponsor exemplified this viewpoint:

> *I think for me it's more about how is the committee built and functioning that will determine if it's effective at what it's role is in the process… Actually, to be honest with you if the committee isn't able to make a decision one way or the other that's not a big deal to me because that just shows that there's a range of different opinions… So whether they make a decision or not isn't that to me important. (SI03, industry sponsor)*

Six sponsors considered influence on outcomes to be an element of committee effectiveness:

*Another is having a positive influence on standard operating guidelines, operating plans or tactical, and strategic forest management plans…A positively influenced standard operating guideline would be where there is some discussion. Options are looked at. I'm always keen on presenting options as opposed to "Here's the answer. Please rubberstamp it." (SI08, industry sponsor)*

Members also believed process criteria were important, with 8 members mentioning process criteria in their responses, while 6 members cited influence on outcomes as a way to determine their own committee's effectiveness. One member described how they viewed effectiveness of their committee as having a positive relationship between the committee sponsor and the community:

*I think I would generally gauge the support for the organization within the community… I hear very little in terms of negative feedback about [the Company] other than the pulp mill smell on a general basis... You don't hear people generally complaining and I think that speaks to the effectiveness of that group as well. (M07, member)*

Practitioners were the group most likely to focus on outcomes in defining effectiveness, perhaps because of their roles as evaluators and auditors of committee processes. Six out of seven practitioners interviewed discussed the role of outcomes in measuring effectiveness, and five practitioners also emphasized process criteria. One respondent summarized their views:

*The main question should be does it make a difference in planning? And I guess the answer is not no but it's not a loud and clear yes either. And yes it makes a difference in the planning process as long as it doesn't impact on the allowable annual cut. As long as it doesn't put constraint on the logging activity planned, yes, you could make a difference. (P01, academic)*

### 4.2 Process criteria for members

Some elements of process that were raised in interviews, such as attendance and member turnover, can certainly be influenced by committee sponsors but were largely decided by members themselves. These criteria are summarized in Table 4.2 and include attendance, member satisfaction, enduring membership, knowledge of members, member turnover, and member conduct.

**Table 4.2 Process criteria for members**

| Criterion | Illustrative Quote | Interviewee |
|---|---|---|
| Attendance | *When I go to an LCC meeting I look at attendance. What level of attendance are we getting? Are members consistently attending? It does not contribute to a good functioning LCC when you have members just not showing up.* | Government sponsor (SG02) |
| Member satisfaction | *Make sure everybody is happy. Make sure people go away thinking they had a good time and learned something. And we always poll them all the time. "What is it that interests you? What is it you want to learn more about?" Unless you get the feedback it's very hard to survive.* | Industry sponsor (SI07) |
| Enduring membership | *I think the ability to have longstanding memberships, so through whatever organization. My perception is that a lot of these folks have been at the [committee] table for a lot of years. So these different groups are invested not only at the company level but sort of at the individual level into this. So I think that would sort of be one of the criteria I would use as well. Same faces around the table over a number of different years.* | Member (M07) |
| Knowledge of members | *So you need people on the committee that have a high degree of knowledge about the FMP process. Because that's the framework within which the committee functions. And I think that comes down to training from the government in terms of keeping everybody on point and so that they know their role and they don't digress. So I'd say knowledge about the FMP process is very useful in terms of effectiveness.* | Industry sponsor (SI06) |
| Member turnover | *Not a surprise, but a lot of times fresh eyes, fresh ears are a good thing and not having that same person sitting on the table for 10 years.* | Practitioner (P06) |
| Member conduct | *I think it's about helping people bring their best self forward in these situations about really tough topics. So taking some of the politics away, taking some of the emotions away and just creating that space to be able to have that type of conversation.* | Practitioner (P04) |

### 4.2.1 Attendance

Sixteen interviewees cited attendance as one of the main criteria for assessing effectiveness of their committee, including a majority of sponsors (13). These statements usually focused on greater attendance being an indicator of a more effective committee. Attendance was important to sponsors because it is required for participation to proceed. Without members in attendance, the committee cannot move forward with its agenda, and the participation process cannot take place, as this sponsor attested:

> *I'd say if you don't have quorum then you can't vote on anything and you just have to table the discussion until the next time. So if quorum is not reached and you don't have enough voting members then it's kind of null and void to even hold the meeting. So attendance is important. (SI06, industry sponsor)*

About half of the interviewees (7) who mentioned attendance also expressed concern that a lack of attendance might be limiting the effectiveness of their committee. Both sponsors and a few members seemed to share this perspective:

> *Your hope is that they don't disband it… because there was twice as many people here last night than there was the last two meetings I've attended… you're just scared, you know, that "We don't have time for this" and they throw it in the corner. (M05, member)*

### 4.2.2 Member Satisfaction

Satisfaction of members was another key criterion mentioned by interviewees as contributing to FAC effectiveness. Several sponsors (5) mentioned the use of surveys to gauge levels of member satisfaction on the committee as a main method of evaluating effectiveness. In some cases, member satisfaction surveys are used to satisfy the requirements of certification programs or forest management planning indicators about effective public engagement. One sponsor described the process in this way:

> *[A]s part of the sustainable forest management plan that we've developed here, it includes an indicator of PAG satisfaction with the public participation process. And incorporated into that indicator is a questionnaire… that [is] designed to try and assess their level of satisfaction with the public participation process. (SI14, industry sponsor)*

Seven years' worth of member surveys from the Hinton FRAG were included as part of the document review and demonstrated fairly high levels of satisfaction amongst members of that committee. Members reported being fairly satisfied with the content and quality of meeting presentations. However, a portion of members surveyed seemed unsure whether there was room for improvement within the committee, as 40% of members were "not sure" whether effectiveness could be increased somehow. Average responses to the question of how well the committee was functioning between the years 2009-2018 are included below:

**Table 4.3 Average member satisfaction survey responses, Hinton FRAG**

| | ***Not well*** | ***Adequately*** | ***Good*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| How well do you think FRAG is functioning? | 0 | 29 (44%) | 37 (56%) |
| | ***No*** | ***Yes*** | ***Not Sure*** |
| Are you satisfied with the quality, level and content of presentations? | 2 (3%) | 62 (94%) | 2 (3%) |
| Is there anything that needs to be done to make the process more effective? | 36 (55%) | 3 (5%) | 26 (40%) |

Source: Hinton FRAG internal member satisfaction surveys 2009-2018

### 4.2.3 Enduring Membership

Another element of process that contributed to perceptions of effectiveness was enduring membership, with 21 interviewees mentioning the topic. This criterion reflects the benefits of a longstanding group of members who have been with the committee over time and therefore add to the effectiveness of the group. One sponsor expressed the longstanding memberships on their committee:

> *[T]here must be something worthwhile for the people because we have people that have been there since the beginning. So twenty-five plus years. And others that have been there for a fifteen to twenty-year range. So they must be getting something positive out of it. Some satisfaction. Or otherwise they just wouldn't be coming to those meetings. (SI11, industry sponsor)*

In addition to length of membership, the criteria of enduring membership also relates to the passion and commitment of long time members, as described by this interviewee:

> *And there is a dedication there from a number of members that as I said there is a passionate side to a lot of these members. In a good way. They're there because they care about – you know it's a public resource. It's a large forest. It's over a million hectares of Crown land. (SG02, government sponsor)*

Three interviewees highlighted the possibility of enduring membership being a limiting factor for effectiveness as well. These interviewees felt that longstanding members had the potential to become entrenched in their views and be less open-minded than newer members might be:

*So I think that can actually influence the effectiveness of public advisory committees because of the people who then come and sit on them. And if you get some people that maybe they're new to a community and they want to get involved, they come with a clean slate, they don't know what to expect… You'll see someone saying, well, you know, what about this? And then there's some person who's been around for 10 years or 15 or 20 years saying, "Oh, well we tried that before," you know. So there can be a little bit of a historical weight that drags down the effectiveness of the committee. (P07, certifying body)*

### 4.2.4 Knowledge of Members

Related to enduring membership is the knowledge that individual members hold and build over time. A majority of people (21) raised this issue during their interviews and noted that knowledge of members is important for effectiveness in multiple ways. Interviewees reported that knowledge of the forest management planning process helps to increase committee effectiveness. One respondent described the importance of building members' knowledge over time through committee processes:

*Whereas if you're meeting more frequently there's an ongoing dialogue, there's an ability for members in a group to get more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues and the forest company. People can say, okay, you know, you guys understand. Two or three years ago you wouldn't have understood this topic, but now we do. We can roll up our sleeves and get really into this… So those groups are more effective, more motivated groups. (P06, certifying body)*

In addition to knowledge of forest management planning, interviewees mentioned the value of having members with a wide range of knowledge to provide input into the FAC process. This might take the form of diverse educational backgrounds as well as local and traditional knowledge of members, as one respondent described:

*He may have never gone to university, but he had that real life experience… he knew darn well the way that the forest ought to be cut in order to address the issue of a certain part of that ecosystem or ecological world that they're in. Again, he probably, I would argue, isn't an expert in those fields, but he has a fundamental understanding of how the*

*forest works from a lifetime of firsthand experiences out there and he's able to bring all that knowledge to the table. (M01, member)*

About half of the interviewees (10) who mentioned member knowledge also believed there were constraints on effectiveness based on this criterion. For example, one sponsor said the use of GIS maps and complex modelling can be "a little over the top" for some members with less formal scientific training. Other constraints included the "very technical" forest management planning systems that make decision-making difficult for non-specialist committee members.

### 4.2.5 Member Turnover

While many interviewees viewed enduring membership as a positive factor, several interviewees also mentioned the importance of member turnover for promoting effectiveness by introducing new energy and ideas into the process. Respondents were split between those who talked about new membership as a positive influence on committee effectiveness (7), and those who identified potential challenges with turnover (6). One interviewee framed the benefits of new membership on FACs:

*My point on that is they have some longstanding membership mixed with some new cycling membership. So they have a lot of experience with some new blood, new membership coming in to bring new ideas. (SI03, industry sponsor)*

If interviewees viewed the addition of new members positively, a lack of turnover in members could be seen as a constraint on effectiveness, as this sponsor explained:

*So those individuals, they're lifers, if you wish and they don't want to go away. And that's not good either. But to find replacements… I think that's a limiting factor for sure in contributing to the committee's effectiveness. It certainly influences the conversation because we always circle it back to the same old thing. And sometimes you just feel like a broken record over and over. Talking about the same thing. (SI13, industry sponsor)*

Six interviewees felt that new members posed some challenges for effectiveness, usually because of the knowledge required to get familiarized with committee processes:

*And new members, while a good thing, there is a bit of a learning curve sometimes. And it takes a little while to sort of get up to speed. Sometimes I think they get overwhelmed with the breadth of issues and the diversity. (SI08, industry sponsor)*

### 4.2.6 Member Conduct

About half of interview respondents (15) mentioned the role of member conduct at FAC meetings as being relevant to the group's effectiveness. These respondents believed that without a certain level of professionalism, effective process was not possible:

*We don't have any super strong individual personalities that try to run the PAG for the benefit of their own individual interests. Everyone seems to be pulling in the same direction…for [that reason] I would suggest it's quite effective. (SI14, industry sponsor)*

Interviewees also shared instances where the conduct of individuals on the committee had blocked the group from operating effectively. One sponsor elaborated:

*I think there [are] individuals that can sometimes sour the discussion with personal agendas…Yeah and I think it's just sometimes issues are close to their hearts because it's something – that they may remove their stakeholder hat and put on their personal hat, you know? That's just human nature, right? (SI03, industry sponsor)*

## 4.3 Process criteria for sponsors

The next several sections present criteria associated with the sponsors of committees and how their actions support or limit effectiveness of FACs. These elements of process were viewed mainly as the responsibility of the sponsor, such as support for members in the form of meals, compensation, and training, field trips, and organizing facilitation for meetings. Less straightforward process criteria related to sponsors included arranging adequate representation of stakeholders on committees, being responsive to committee concerns, and building trust and relationships between sponsors and members. These themes are summarized in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Process criteria for sponsors**

| Criterion | Illustrative Quote | Interviewee |
|---|---|---|
| Member support | *There's two things you should never do to a public advisory committee: bore them or give them crappy food. Because let me assure you that the only times I really get negative feedback – and I haven't had this in a long, long time – it's because somebody served a lousy lunch. It sounds silly but it's really not.* | Industry sponsor (SI07) |
| Representation | *So I guess number one in any advisory committee like this you need to have balanced representation of the public and of the interest groups that are on the forest. So if you have a lopsided group that's only focused on one side of the triangle, it doesn't necessarily become an even debate or the stakeholders don't always give the full circle range of consideration to any advice they give to the Ministry. So I would say balanced membership.* | Industry sponsor (SI03) |
| Responsiveness | *I guess the willingness on the part of the company to incorporate the perspectives, the opinions, the input they get from members of the groups. A group that is constituted to effectively rubber stamp whatever the company wants is not a good use of anyone's time.* | Practitioner (P06) |
| Facilitation | *He is excellent in facilitating the meetings and doing so in a professional manner and making sure that everybody's voices, everybody gets a chance to speak and their voices are heard and I think he plays the role of arbitrator or facilitator really well. And I think that helps make our LCC truly functional.* | Member (M01) |
| Field trips | *So that situation I think built confidence within the group itself to actually be out there and realizing that they played a really important role in decision making rather than just looking at the data or checking a box or that kind of thing. They actually made a decision based on something that they actually saw themselves. And it really help[s] with when you're touching something or you're actually there and seeing it rather than a photograph.* | Industry sponsor (SI05) |
| Relationship-building | *They're very much about the relationship. Those tend to be the public advisory groups that seem to have more of an influence. When companies develop a good relationship with the community they want to keep that good relationship.* | Practitioner (P07) |

### 4.3.1 Member Support

Half of interview respondents (17) mentioned some form of support for members being a positive contributor to committee effectiveness. Often, these criteria promoted effectiveness by encouraging attendance and recognition of members' time and efforts. Other interviewees spoke about providing support to members in the form of training or mentorship. Eight respondents talked about the impact of simply providing a meal for committee members as a token of the sponsors' appreciation.

Seven interviewees described the importance of monetary support for members, either in the form of compensation for mileage, accommodations, or honoraria for time spent by volunteers. In the case of the Mistik PAG, the sponsor books hotel rooms for members travelling to attend the meetings, provides meals throughout the day, as well as an honorarium to cover the

time and gas of participants to attend. Members spoke about the value of this support in removing barriers for people to attend meetings, particularly for participants from northern communities with a longer distance to travel.

### 4.3.2 Representation

Twenty-one interviewees (64%) brought up the issue of representation as being relevant to effectiveness in some way. Related to the attendance criterion mentioned above, this criterion centres on achieving balanced representation of a range of stakeholder views. This range of views may refer to balancing both the types of stakeholder groups present as well as the characteristics of individuals around the committee table such as age, gender, ethnicity, and education. Usually, it is the responsibility of the committee sponsor to solicit membership that represents these views to ensure opportunities for balanced, diverse committee discussion.

Interviewees also noted the lack of sufficient representation as being a major barrier for committee effectiveness. The most frequently mentioned groups absent from committees were Indigenous groups and young people. Twelve interviewees (36%) viewed Indigenous representation as a limiting factor on their committee, as this sponsor described:

> *We have one group on our public advisory group that is not extremely well represented or as well represented as what we would like and that's the First Nations. So that's where I think the effectiveness of the committee could have been improved. And that's just a representation issue that we've been struggling with for a while. (SG01, government sponsor)*

Three interviewees also lamented the absence of younger members on their committees. One sponsor talked about the limited representation comprising their committee:

> *I don't think that you can say that that's a representation of an across the board population… there's some of our members on the LCC that have a phone and don't even have internet or email. Or in general, they're older, whiter men… you know, we've made a concerted effort to bring in First Nation and Metis communities. There's been a concerted effort to bring in schools to provide a younger generation access to that opportunity. So it's not easy. And mostly, if you came in and you sat down and went through a meeting, you'd look around the table and be like, oh, hey, there's a lot of gray*

*hair in here. Right. It's not insulting to them. That's what they are right. Because they started it, right? (SG15, government sponsor)*

### 4.3.3 Responsiveness

A majority of participants (24) talked about the responsiveness of the committee sponsor in relation to effectiveness. According to participants, this meant the process was more effective when members felt the sponsor was truly listening to, incorporating, and following up with input received from the committee. One interviewee described how important it is for members to feel their input is heard, and responded to, by sponsors:

*We get along, we listen to each other and I think it's an opportunity for free expression at the table and voices are heard. They're not just hoodwinking people. Oh, that's cute. You have your ideas and we're not going to listen to them. (M01, member)*

Members of both case study committees also mentioned responsiveness as being particularly important. For example, the Hinton FRAG used issue tracking documents to monitor committee concerns over time and show members how the company has followed up on requests and action items. A member of the Mistik PAG summarized their views on responsiveness:

*So I think that's important is that stakeholders know that Mistik will listen. That the people that work there will listen to them and they will do their best to respect, you know, if they want to protect a berry picking patch or especially when it comes to Indigenous values and you know, protecting like a family grave site or like really special cultural space or if people have identified species at risk in the area. Of course they're going to like back off from harvesting there. And like all those kind of cultural and conservation values are really important… that's huge is that people know that they can reach out to Mistik, and they feel comfortable doing that. (M08, member)*

### 4.3.4 Facilitation

About half (16) of interviewees felt that having an independent facilitator was a factor for committee effectiveness as well. Eleven of these respondents mentioned the strength of their own committee Chair or facilitator in improving the efficiency of meetings. Other interviewees spoke about how the lack of effective facilitation can take away from committee effectiveness:

*The facilitator can make a huge difference. If they're no good… if you've got twenty people all giving their opinions at once that's anarchy. So we have a facilitator who tries to keep stuff on track as well as make sure nothing blows up. (SI07, industry sponsor)*

Another sponsor explained that facilitation was no longer happening on their committee due to financial reasons, and wondered whether this may affect committee processes:

*One of the things that we struggle with is facilitation. So we used to have a facilitator. And then during the whole global recession everyone was losing money it was one of those things that we cut out. And so I don't know. I'm just speculating if it would be any different if we had a third-party facilitator than it actually is with a [committee] member. But it would feel different. Because you would have someone who has no interest [except for] facilitating the meeting. (SI04, industry sponsor)*

Plate 4.1: Hinton Boardwalk, sponsored by West Fraser Mills
Photo: Amanda Lindgren

### 4.3.5 Field Trips

Thirteen interviewees (39%) mentioned the positive influence of field trips and time in the forest for committee effectiveness. There were multiple reasons for field trips promoting better committee processes. For example, this sponsor detailed how time in the bush fostered good relations between committee members:

> *It's actually the best way to keep relations because we always have a half day meeting. We have a dinner in the night there and then in the morning we go on a field trip. And if it's in the field we have a barbeque in the bush and everything. We used to have a couple of older ladies, they're now gone, who would cook over an open fire for everybody in the bush for us. But it's the best way – you want to promote relationships? Cut bread together in the bush. Good bread. Yeah, so we have fun. (SI07)*

A forestry consultant described how time in the forest can help educate committee members and alleviate fears about forest management practices:

> *I like tree-huggers and Greenpeace people. I just bring them by the hand and walk in the forest. And they realize people working in the forest are not devils. They are ordinary people that like to do a good job. They have kids at school. You know? Suddenly they're good old white Americans, you know, so it's okay. We're scared of what we don't know. And all these tables, all these processes, it was just about time that we do that…And I'm personally learning a lot more walking through the bush than reading some university materials. So learning is a matter of observing and putting things together…The way we operate I would say in hardwood forests is more organic. More and more organic. People realize that when you bring them in the forest. (P03, forestry consultant)*

### 4.3.6 Relationship-Building & Trust

Approximately half (16) of interviewees directly expressed the importance of building relationships for the committee to be truly effective. Sponsors explained how the committees were valuable to them in helping to build ties with community members and prevent conflict from occurring:

> *I think the biggest value from a forest products industry perspective in terms of the operation of the LCC that is maybe not explicitly written down would be that you can*

*build those relationships with the public a lot easier. You can hear the concerns and you can actually get out ahead of stuff. (SI06, industry sponsor)*

Interviewees also acknowledged that relationships and trust take time to build, and can be related to other criteria like enduring membership. For Mistik, relationship-building has been key to the company's success for nearly thirty years, as detailed in Box 4.1.

**Box 4.1 Building Relationships for PAG Success**

Mistik Management and its Public Advisory Group embody the importance of relationship building in successful engagement processes. One interviewee surmised this may be due to the unique governance structure of Mistik (see Box 3.2). Even with a 50% stake of Aboriginal ownership, Mistik has experienced tensions with local First Nations, particularly during the 1992 "Canoe Lake Crisis" where local people blocked access to logging operations to protest their lack of involvement in forestry (Wyatt and Dumoe 2018).

Mistik has therefore had to work to establish positive working relationships with surrounding communities. Co-management boards were created starting in 1993 with each First Nation to allow them to review and comment on Mistik's forest operating plans. Importantly, these co-management boards provide income based on harvested volume that can be used for various community needs.

The company also provided the largest suite of member supports identified in this study, including: two meals and refreshments during meetings, overnight accommodation for all members who require it, transportation costs to and from meetings, and full day field trips. These supports are significant due to the distance required to travel from northern communities to attend meetings.

Through these actions, members feel that Mistik demonstrates their commitment to listening to local concerns. One member remarked that PAG meetings often seemed to be a chance for members to catch up, conduct business in town, and get a general sense of goings-on. Another mentioned that members should always feel welcome to sit down with company representatives to look at a map and discuss particular harvesting concerns. In the words of one participant:
*"I think the opportunity for meeting is a lot of relationship building… I think that goes a long way towards making people, you know, feeling like we're all on the same page moving forward because really that's almost what you have to rely on… We have to have faith in that leadership." (M09)*

### 4.4 Shared process criteria

Some elements of effectiveness identified by participants were not attributed directly to members or sponsors of committees. The following section focuses on elements of process raised by interviewees that intersect both sponsors' and members' area of responsibility and examine how the tone or governance of committee meetings contributes to or limits effectiveness. The role of public participation in effective committee processes also emerged as a shared criterion between members and sponsors. Finally, participants identified having a "smooth" committee process as both a challenge and a benefit to effectiveness. These criteria are summarized in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Shared process criteria for members and sponsors**

| Criterion | Illustrative Quote | Interviewee |
|---|---|---|
| Governance | *I'd also say a clear terms of reference. So the group has to understand what their roles are. They have to understand how decisions should be made and how to communicate with each other fairly and openly without prejudice.* | Industry sponsor (SI03) |
| | *Well I guess what is the tone of the meetings? Is it positive? Is it negative? … So there is a sense that "I may not agree with it but can I live with it?" Right? And by and large the people on there yeah, maybe it's not quite what they want to see but you know what they can live with it…They're willing to take that step. As opposed to standing on a hill and dying on the hill. So the group moves forward because people are open enough to say "Yeah, I got what I needed out of that discussion or that decision. You know, it may not be exactly what I wanted but I got what I needed out of it."* | Industry sponsor (SI10) |
| Public Engagement | *Part of the role there is promotion. They're promoting the fact that there is a dialogue regarding forest management out there. And they're trying to establish that dialogue and to establish it and increase it where possible.* | Government sponsor (SG02) |
| Smoothness of process | *I think I believe it plays an important role in this forest management process in the modern era. An invaluable role that can't be calibrated necessarily in outcomes that are measurable because as I said, you almost measure its success by the fact that there are no problems or there are few problems or there are far fewer problems and it's hard to measure those.* | Member (M01) |
| | *The other end is if they just sit there and they just say, yes, yes, yes. And they agree with everything. Then there's no ripples either. So it's efficient but is it effective [?]* | Government sponsor (SG15) |

#### 4.4.1 Governance

Many interviewees (70%) expressed a strong connection between the governance of the committee and its effectiveness. In fact, 82% of sponsors (14) mentioned good governance in relation to the success of their committees. For example, sponsors believed a clear terms of reference was helpful for articulating the role of the committee and keeping members on track. Sponsors also reported different styles of governance that they felt worked well for their

committee. In contrast to formal decision-making mechanisms, one sponsor advocated for a more informal approach:

> *I've changed it around so that the start of each meeting is kind of a round table update from each of the stakeholders. Often there's overlap or there's things they're doing that because they now know about it… they can make a better decision or there can be some good cross pollination… So governing themselves that way seems effective to me rather than… something a little more formal. But these guys don't – they're volunteers. They don't want it formal and stuffy. (SI08, industry sponsor)*

Some members also expressed concerns about the governance style of their committees. This could be related to the format of meetings or challenges with the limited scope of committee proceedings. One member noted their concerns about cultural issues with meeting styles and the decision-making role of the committee:

> *It's sort of awkward in terms of there's an agenda that [the Company] provides (which of course, how could we create an agenda? We don't know what's happening, right?) We're going through the agenda and then someone says something like, "You know what you did to [names an individual] up in this block? Well that's no good. We've got to fix that." And there's sort of this awkward thing because this person has kind of hijacked the agenda. It's something that should be dealt with, but there really isn't… there's no formal way to approach it in the process. And often that insertion comes from the northern community representatives. So, I would say there may be cultural issues in terms of running meetings and designing a meeting that fits for everyone. And having that opportunity for people to kind of raise those issues that don't get heard. (M09, member)*

The topic of consensus building was also raised by 5 interviewees as being either a challenge or an indicator for effectiveness on their committees. One sponsor explained these challenges like so:

> *There are polar ideals. There are some that want more access. There are some that don't want any access, you know. So they're never going to all agree on how things should be. So that's where you can't give them a five is that they're never unified. I mean they can be from time to time. But most times when I know the result is going to come out and I*

*know there's going to be "Well, here's how we look at it this way. But you could also say this and this is important as well," you know? (SI03, industry sponsor)*

### 4.4.2 Public Engagement

Participants also said that engagement with the general public was relevant for having effective committee processes. For sponsors, this could be about increasing the level of dialogue about forest management between industry, government, and the public, or simply about achieving a requisite level of appropriate public engagement to legitimize the process. Ten sponsors commented on public engagement in some way as related to committee effectiveness. One representative responses was as follows:

*They add an element of credibility to the forest management planning process in that if we're dealing with the public and they understand that there's a [committee] that's involved with the inner workings of the forest management system it adds a layer of consultation in the spectrum that adds a bit of peer review or credibility to the forest management decisions that the Ministry is making. (SI03, industry sponsor)*

Another respondent clarified the need for committee processes to extend beyond simply committee members, and viewed this as a measure of effectiveness:

*We really put a concerted effort over the last number of years to ensuring that the effectiveness is not linked to an individual, but it actually is linked to the broader audience of an organization. So really, it's the message doesn't just stay with the committee, right? Because I mean really we want to make sure that the People of Ontario or Saskatchewan… the broader the audience, the more information that you have out there, the better overall effectiveness you're going to have. (SG15, government sponsor)*

### 4.4.3 Dealing with Conflict and Controversy

The smoothness of the committee process emerged as a way that interviewees determined the effectiveness of their committees as well. About half of sponsors (9) mentioned a lack of conflict or controversy as contributing to the effectiveness of their committee. One government sponsor viewed the absence of conflict on their committee in a positive light, illustrated by the fact that they received no complaints about conflicts with the forestry company.

At times, a smooth process was associated with well-established committees that may have dealt with conflict in the past but have now reached a type of equilibrium in their functioning. This example is demonstrated by the Hinton FRAG in Box 4.2.

Three member respondents also believed that having a smoothly running process was indicative of things working well over time. When asked about any potentially controversial issues the committee had dealt with in the past three years, this sponsor explained:

> *And it's just gotten to be right now where it's just regular business. So to begin with, it was controversial and then as people started to understand it and see what it actually looked like out on the field and saw that there's big buffers. We're very careful about it. The issue kind of faded and it's not an issue anymore. So in terms of the last three years, really on [our committee], nothing. So we do have some of those things from time to time but the last really controversial one we had was back in the late 90s. (SI04, industry sponsor)*

However, other sponsors expressed concerns that too much smoothness of the process may signal an ineffective committee due to a lack of debate and discussion. One of these sponsors is quoted here:

> *So the example I thought of was our last operating plan we brought it to the stakeholder committee and that plan was the sole focus of the meeting. My planner sets it up on the GIS and has everything available on the screen. He showed the area and says, "We can go anywhere you want. We can look at anything you want. We have all the information. Everything's here." And nobody had any concerns. There was silence. Like you worry is silence consent because people are happy and trust you? Or is silence they're just not engaging or they're bored or which is it? (SI08, industry sponsor)*

**Box 4.2 Past Controversies & Present Contentment**

The Hinton forest has been under active management since 1955 and currently belongs to West Fraser Mills, the largest lumber manufacturer in the world. When it was formed in 1989, the Hinton FRAG was Alberta's first public advisory committee in forestry. There are still some original members remaining on the group according to the committee's organizer, though these individuals are getting older and leaving the committee or dying.

This longstanding membership creates "a good connection going back. A good history," for the group that contributes to their effectiveness today. Members can recall controversial cut blocks dealt with at the committee table nearly twenty years ago, when the minutiae of harvesting near the Jasper National Park boundary were carefully debated by FRAG members, local landowners, and forest scientists. The company invited ad-hoc members affected by the cut block to join FRAG discussions of harvesting plans. One long-time member remembers the scrutiny environmental groups and tourism operators placed upon the company at that time and how the FRAG was a place for all parties to meet together and eventually resolve their issues over multi-year discussions.


Photo: Amanda Lindgren

Thirty years on, West Fraser faces little controversy at the FRAG. The company has learned to vet plans and actions through the public advisory committee and works proactively to inform the group of the status of various issues of concern, such as herbicide application. There is little member turnover, and the company values the knowledge its members have acquired over its decades long history. The sponsor keeps detailed records of issues brought forward by FRAG members and solicits member feedback on an annual survey.

As seems to be the case for many committees with a long history of public engagement, historical conflict appears to have paved the way for smooth operations today. The committee organizer attributes part of this success to the diversified makeup of the town, which is largely supportive of surrounding industries such as oil and gas, mining, and two forest management areas.

## 4.5 Areas of Improvement for Effectiveness

Interviewees were asked to describe both limiting factors for the effectiveness of their committee and also provide suggestions on how these limitations might be addressed. These responses help to inform objective four, to make recommendations on improving FAC processes.

### 4.5.1 Limitations on committee effectiveness

Participants were asked specifically about factors they felt were limiting the effectiveness of their committee. Sponsors were asked to identify a situation where they felt their committee could have been more effective and if they had any suggestions for improvements. Eight sponsors interviewed did not identify a specific situation where they felt effectiveness was lacking in their committee, while the remaining nine sponsors described various situations where they said effectiveness could be improved. The majority of these responses related to the quality of engagement of the committee being lower than the sponsor would have hoped, or a missed opportunity for the committee to engage with other groups in the public and government. A sponsor summarized these views:

> *It's our staff time which equates to me to public time and that we're there presenting or doing something and spending taxpayers' dollars. Is that worthwhile?... If you come to the meeting and you're presented something and you know, you don't take the opportunity to share or ask things then I don't think that - I think that you're limiting your effectiveness. (SG15, government sponsor)*

When asked about limiting factors for their committees, sponsors largely cited process-related criteria such as attendance, stakeholder representation, recruitment and education of new members, and others. The most frequent limitation noted by sponsors (9) was recruitment of new members and associated issues with bringing them into the committee. As two sponsors explained, these challenges can be related to new members as well as long-time members:

> *The most limiting thing is recruiting good people with the time to be with us. (SI07, industry sponsor)*

> *I have it in my mind that there is kind of an old way of thinking and a new way of thinking in the resource management sector. Resource management itself has become more complex and it is complex now. Much more complex than it was twenty-five or thirty*

*years ago. And there aren't always simple solutions to problems. And some individuals on the LCC are older. And they've been around for a long time…They're still thinking in the past. Looking more back to the past than into the future. And it's just that being open to new ideas or open to new forms of thinking isn't always there. (SG02, government sponsor)*

Four sponsors identified challenges pertaining to the scope of the committees and how this limits the ability of the committee to influence change. Sponsors expressed this limitation in relation to government mandates for committees in Ontario in particular:

*I think their scope is very, very limiting, right? But it's there for one purpose only. It's to provide recommendations to the district manager on issues…They're not necessarily there to solve things. They're there more to provide advice and to provide concerns that are raised through the constituents. (SI13, industry sponsor)*

Members cited various limitations such as not enough time to meet or review materials, limited capacity to travel to and attend meetings, and the technicality of forest management planning processes. The greatest limiting factor for members was a lack of opportunity for feedback on decisions or input to the committee sponsor:

*Maybe more opportunity for feedback. It's one thing to put on a presentation and say does anyone have any questions or concerns versus fill out this form and we'll look at it. It would be good for more opportunity to give a little bit of feedback. (M03, member)*

*So see that's the formal part where I think there's an opportunity where [the Company] doesn't have to actually listen to it, but then if they got some formal kind of request, it just legitimizes more the specific thing. That to me could be a benefit. You don't have to. It's not binding. But then boom, boom, boom. (M02, member)*

*I always kept ringing that climate change gong and it took a while for them to, (and certainly they weren't the only ones in the province), for people to really accept that a), climate change was happening, was human made, and it was actually going to have an impact in Saskatchewan. (M09, member)*

The responses of practitioners varied widely as to factors that could limit the effectiveness of a committee. One practitioner shared the concern that committees could have limited influence on decision-making as well, remarking that "*A group that is constituted to effectively rubber stamp whatever the company wants is not a good use of anyone's time" (P06, certifying body).* Another respondent echoed members' comments about having the capacity and time to prepare for and attend committee meetings. This respondent characterized money and resources as a limiting factor for committees:

> *And when you are serious about a meeting normally you read before…you know for one day of meeting there is most likely three days of preparation and meeting with others… So you know, if the government would be really serious about having people putting their time they should consider that. And when somebody is paid to do something that means his work is appreciated. If he is not appreciated you lose the job. (P03, forestry consultant)*

### 4.5.2 Recommendations for improving committee processes

Following on their discussion of limiting factors for effectiveness, some interviewees identified possible recommendations to improve their committees. Limitations and recommendations were often connected, as perceived areas of limitations naturally become areas for improvement. For sponsors, the most frequently mentioned recommendations included providing more and better training for committee members (5), especially newer members, and providing education on current resource management issues (4). Depending on the province, this recommendation would be taken up by the committee sponsor or government:

> *I'd say it comes down to the legislation in terms of their mandate is explicit. I'd say it comes down to the District Manager in Ontario's case making sure that the committee is well-trained, well-equipped, well-attended and knows their mandate and place within that. So I'd say it comes down to personalities more than anything. (SI06, industry sponsor)*

For other interviewees, recommendations were related more to reviewing the mandate of their committee and improving the quality of engagement on the committee through facilitation

and greater opportunities for deliberation. Four sponsors and members suggested revisiting the Terms of Reference or strategic planning exercises as potential areas for improvement. Four interviewees also suggested field trips as a way to decrease complexity of forest management issues and to help committee members work through situations. One member suggested making clearer the linkages for committee members as to why issues are important for sustainable forest management:

> *If it's the same group over and over for a number of years then you maybe don't have to get into those details, but I think linking it back to the sustainable forest management practices is really important for them to be able to say yes, and because of this we're doing this, which we think is more sustainable or better. And I think that's the intent, but it's not necessarily pointed out as directly as it could be. (M07, member)*

Recommendations also focused on improving deliberations by renewing consultation policies with First Nations and providing information to communities in accessible, plain language. Four practitioners advocated for increasing "tough conversations" as a way to improve committee processes by working through challenging issues:

> *I think improvement is knowing when to have tough conversations, what are the tough conversations and then dedicating energy towards that I think. And then just getting better at conflict resolution, getting better at facilitation, you know, like all of those things about having people come together and helping to have those conversations in a more expedient manner. (P04, certifying body)*

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed results relevant to the first objective, which is to characterize effectiveness for FACs. These results relied mainly on interview responses from sponsors, members, and forestry practitioners and their perceptions of what types of factors contribute to the effectiveness of committees. The findings suggest that elements of process are most important when it comes to understandings of effectiveness, particularly for sponsors. Indeed, coding from both interviews and documents referenced process criteria 595 times, while codes for outcome criteria created just 334 references. Analysis showed that all 17 sponsors interviewed described process as being important to their understanding of effectiveness, with 6

of those 17 including some measure of outcomes as well (Table 4.1). Members and practitioners were more evenly split between process and outcome, with 8 members and 5 practitioners noting elements of process and 6 members and 6 practitioners including outcome criteria.

The emphasis on process is further demonstrated by sponsors' ratings of effectiveness and influence. Sponsors collectively rated their committees 4.38/5 (87.6%) on effectiveness, and 3.48 (69.6%) on influence. This suggests that perceptions of effectiveness are less strongly tied to influence on outcomes, and that a committee may rate highly on effectiveness by successfully achieving process criteria.

Reviewing the types of process criteria associated with members, attendance was a criterion that was important to most sponsors (13). Enduring membership and knowledge of members both emerged as effectiveness criteria for 21 interviewees. Several criteria can be viewed as both strengths and weaknesses, such as member turnover, which was viewed by 7 interviewees to be a positive influence on committee effectiveness, and by 6 interviewees to be a challenge for continuity. About half of interviewees also felt that member conduct was a contributor to having a successful process.

Responsiveness was the top process-related criteria for sponsors and was mentioned by 24 interviewees as being a signal of effectiveness. Representation of stakeholders was also viewed as a strong indicator of success or failure, and 12 respondents noted Indigenous representation as a particular struggle for their committee. Facilitation, field trips and member support in the form of meals, compensation and training were also viewed as relevant factors for committee success by interviewees. Over half of members interviewed (5) felt that relationship building and trust were vital for effectiveness.

In terms of shared process criteria, governance emerged as a key contributor for process effectiveness. Seventy percent of interviewees referenced at least one element of governance such as having clear terms of reference, consensus building, and the tone of deliberations. Having a smooth process with few conflicts was viewed positively by a majority of sponsors (9), although a few sponsors (3) and members noted that a lack of debate may negatively impact effectiveness of the committee as well.

Interviewees described limiting factors for committee effectiveness, including challenges with member recruitment, turnover, and training, as well as the limited scope of committee mandates. Participants made suggestions for improving effectiveness such as increasing

resources allocated to member support and training, meeting facilitation, more field trips in the forest, and regular review of committee governance structures.

Following from discussions of effectiveness criteria, participants were asked directly about outcomes of the FAC process and whether their committee had impacted specific decisions. The next chapter will focus on the results of these questions and describe the outcomes influenced by FACs, according to interviewees.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# 5.0 OUTCOMES OF THE FAC PROCESS

This chapter presents results related to objectives two and three, which were focused on the outcomes from the FAC process. Beyond perceptions of effectiveness, interviewees were asked about the actual outcomes resulting from the work of their committee. This chapter includes three subsections related to influence on outcomes. First, interviewee perceptions of influence on outcomes, including the influence of Indigenous peoples and user groups, are discussed. Next, the findings discuss FACs' impact on various levels of outcomes including operating procedures, strategic decisions, and corporate culture. Information sharing and certification were two outcomes that emerged from the interviews as well. Finally, contributions to SFM were also explored with interviewees, including whether the FAC process had influenced any of the priority areas for SFM (see Figure 2.2).

## 5.1 Influence on FAC Outcomes

In contrast to process criteria related to committee effectiveness, outcome criteria for effectiveness reflect the committee's ability to influence and improve decisions about forest management (Beckley et al. 2005). Influence over time and the influence of different actors on forest management were also examined in an effort to determine what factors might contribute to the ability to effectively improve forest management outcomes. This section focuses on the degree to which interviewees' perceived that their committee was able to influence substantive changes in forest management over time. The following sections explore different types of outcomes resulting from this influence (Section 5.2) and specific outcomes for SFM (Section 5.3).

### 5.1.1 Have FACs Improved Forest Management Over Time?

Participants were asked whether they felt the work of their committee had improved forest management over time. About half of sponsors (9) agreed that the influence of their committee had been constructive, usually by providing additional input into forest management planning processes:

> *I think it does from the perspective that it makes it so much easier to get an understanding of what is important to the public. Versus a situation where there might*

*not be a public advisory group and might not be a requirement to advertise plans to the public in that type of, I'll say a vacuum, of public input one might erroneously assume that the public had no issues with respect to forest management. (SI14, industry sponsor)*

One sponsor described how the influence of their committee had resulted in negative impacts due to a lack of active management of the forest:

*They're starting to understand that the decisions they made in the past were very, very poor and had some significant implications, especially right now because there's, the whole forest is burning, and it's out of control because they don't have any active management taking place on the forest…Unfortunately that's created the circumstances that have resulted in the situation we're in today. Which is uncontrollable forest fires in the perfect, perfect condition because you have a significant lack of disturbance that took place over the last 30 years. (SI13, industry sponsor)*

Several interviewees (8) felt that the committee's influence had either been small or remained the same over time. One sponsor described how the FAC system was a marked improvement from previous methods of forest management practiced in the 1970s and 80s. Interviewees believed that the FAC system was an improvement for forest management more generally, but often commented that improvements to the process became more marginal over time as committees became more established:

*If you look at a timeline some of these advisory groups have been around for 10 years, 15 years…. Initially there's a lot of change, a lot of new stuff brought onboard and you know, the trajectory is very steep and very fast. You've covered a lot of ground fairly quickly in the first two or three years and then things start to slow down or there's less need for revision of the plan and things start to taper off. And I don't want to say flat line, but they might plateau…Things are changing they just may not see it as much as they did when they first started because everything was new. They were helping build the plan and it was exciting and the upwards slope of accomplishments and things like that. Ten years into it, maybe not so much. (P06, certifying body)*

A minority of sponsors (5) felt that the influence of their committee had declined over time. Two sponsors attributed this to the rising influence of other actors such as government and Indigenous peoples:

> *I think influence over time on changing actions and policy has diminished… Because as the governments get better at producing operating ground rules and policies and regulation, there becomes little room for improvement. (SI07, industry sponsor)*

> *Over my nineteen years of being involved with the committee I've seen the level of influence change. And that change has been a decrease. The decrease has come from an increase in the influence of First Nations. So for example, we have a specific example of where the stakeholder committee will say yes to something. All it takes is one First Nation to say no. Not even all of them. But just a single one. And it's no. It doesn't happen. (SI08, industry sponsor)*

### 5.1.2 Influence of User Groups

Participants were asked about the influence of different groups within the committee and their ability to be effective in impacting outcomes for forest management. A majority of interviewees (25) mentioned the influence of various stakeholder groups such as tourism, trapping, environmental and recreation groups, on forest management. The influence of various groups on forest management is illustrated in Table 5.1. One member from a recreation organization stated they were involved in the committee for the purpose of having an influence on what happens in the forest:

> *That's what got me on there was my chance to have some say about what's going on out there in the bush. If you don't speak up you can't expect them to know what you want… It's about the only way you can have any input. Again, it's whether they listen to you or not that's the issue. But they do, we make them think about it. We don't always get what we want. (M04, member)*

**Table 5.1 Influence of User Groups on Forest Management**

| Group | Illustrative Quote | Interviewee |
|---|---|---|
| Research organizations | *They have a huge influence on forest management. Like everything they do influences us. Grizzly bear program. Stream crossing programs. I mean it's everything. It's absolutely everything. It has a huge influence on us. There's almost nothing we do that isn't influenced by them.* | Industry sponsor (SI04) |
| Non-governmental organizations | *DUCs play a really important role. So the outfitters and the trappers although they are at this meeting table they don't really influence forest management as such. But DUCs would be the leader for us.* | Industry sponsor (SI05) |
| Government | *Once you're at the ground level and what gets done harvesting, transportation and silviculture it's all pretty much in a manual now…the governments have gone out of their way over the last twenty years making it as close to a cookbook as they can.* | Industry sponsor (SI07) |
| Indigenous Peoples | *[T]heir rights are different. You know, they have rights and abilities that are different from just the general public. So that just makes it a little more complex at times. And being able to see some of those complexities that didn't exist in the same fashion twenty-five years ago.* | Government sponsor (SG02) |

Sponsors talked about the role of different stakeholder organizations depending on their local community context. For example, the Hinton FRAG maintains strong partnerships with the Foothills Research Institute (fRI). Similarly, Mistik has had strong partnerships with environmental non-governmental organizations in the province that have impacted forest management and conservation. Meeting minutes and company correspondence highlighted partnerships with environmental groups such as Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUCs) to conserve Intact Forest Landscapes.

One interviewee from a certifying body also stressed the influence of stakeholder groups on forest management as strengthened by certification programs:

> *Because we're asking companies to look over their fence as well. And work with governments and work with other forest management operations. And Indigenous people and communities and so you have to be innovative and you have to be kind of progressively thinking to be able to pull that off. I think so. I think it does challenge and probably it changes how planning is done, how GIS and technical work is done, etc. (P04, certifying body)*

In terms of the influence of government, some interviewees felt that regulations were limiting the influence of local committees on forest management due to the prescriptive nature of policies and regulations:

> *Policy in Ontario is highly mandated, highly legislated, and highly science-driven. So that stuff, regardless of an individual or group's opinion, is always trumped by legislation…The government essentially controls the framework which we all play in. (SI06, industry sponsor)*

### 5.1.3 Influence of Indigenous Peoples

Many interviewees (21) spoke about the influence of Indigenous peoples on how forests are managed. One respondent highlighted the increasing impact of Indigenous rights on land management over time:

> *How you deal with that in Canada, the evolving dynamic going back and forth around Indigenous rights and title and how that's impacting resource management especially on Crown land. That's another big one that's perennially on our radar. These are all things that they might have been there 20 years ago but they didn't have the prominence that they have now. (P06, certifying body)*

Another theme among interviewees was the emphasis placed on legal processes and rights for Indigenous peoples, which can supersede public advisory group processes. A First Nations member explained that the legally required consultation process that takes place outside of the FAC is more influential than the committee itself:

> *And like legally they have to - we do everything within all the time limits. So they've never said no because they're not allowed to. FRAG is not really mandatory for important concerns because we get them addressed legally through the consultation process. So we basically highlight areas that we have that we want them to stay out of or specific cultural points, is more or less what it is. And that can be anything from a historical gravesite to a camping location or anything important to the community. Then that's never my decision to make. So that's why we have Elders that'll come along to site visits and map review. (M03, member)*

Related to the diminishing influence of committee processes, one sponsor explained how local First Nations had removed themselves from the committee, preferring to consult with the government instead:

> *So we have six local First Nations that are close-ish… and they have extracted themselves off the stakeholder committee… And that's a big change because they've all decided – and it makes sense – that they are not stakeholders. They have totally different rights. The [government] has a government-to-government consultation with them. (SI08, industry sponsor)*

Beyond legal obligations to consult, interviewees also noted cultural reasons why Indigenous members may not wish to participate in FACs:

> *I definitely saw that where there was definitely sort of the forestry industry is run on a western culture way and in the best of western cultural ideals and expectations and courtesies. They ran those programs well. But then there was this whole other cultural divide that they struggled even though they are a highly First Nation-owned organization, they still struggled to kind of deal with that and I think that's where they've been really good at just being open. So if someone walks in their office and says I'm unhappy with this, pulling out a map and talking about it, like I think that's the best way they can move forward. (M09, member)*

### 5.2 Types of Outcomes

Beyond perceptions of influence over time by different actors, this study looked for concrete outcomes from FAC processes. Outcomes from FACs were classified in three categories inspired by Margerum's (2008) typology stating that collaborative groups may influence impacts at the action, policy, and organizational levels. Sponsors were asked to identify whether their committee had influenced outcomes in three different areas: operating procedures, strategic decisions, and corporate culture. Strategic decisions were the area where sponsors felt committees held the most influence, with 14 of 17 sponsors of the opinion that their committee had impacted strategic decision-making or forest management planning. Operating procedures were next; 11 of 17 sponsors agreed that their committee had influenced their day-to-day operations in some way. Corporate culture was the outcome least frequently raised by sponsors,

with 9 of 17 sponsors stating that they felt their committee had had an influence in this area. Members and practitioners also commented on each type of outcome in varying levels of detail, as interviews with members and practitioners were sometimes less structured than for sponsors. Each type of outcome is summarized in Table 5.2 and discussed in further detail below.

**Table 5.2 Types of Outcomes Influenced by Committees, According to Interviewees**

| Group | Illustrative Quote | Interviewee |
|---|---|---|
| Operating procedures | *I think local input does get down to operating and procedures. Especially you know, with a specific stream. You know, provincial laws and national indicators are dealing, you know, they of course deal with streams too, but they're focusing more on generic sizes and fish or no fish. The community input has historical input of what's happened over time and I think you end up with a more customized procedures and operating procedures and practices.* | Practitioner (P05) |
| Strategic decisions | *Well the PAG is more strategic at the forest management plan level, that 20 years strategic plan level because the PAG was born out of an FMP requirement. Part of their certification is what drives the requirements for the public advisory group.* | Government sponsor (SG17) |
| Corporate culture | *So it's the precautionary sort of idea about having these advisory groups is that they change the way you do business just by their very existence…. If they weren't there then you would probably do things differently. And maybe not even on purpose. But you would just go about your business differently because you're not getting that constant input from the public you know in a sort of organized way.* | Industry sponsor (SI04) |
| Information sharing | *So things like climate change. People want to become educated. They want to hear more about it so it's been front and centre as one of our agenda items. Caribou as well. We've done a lot of work with caribou and communities are coming to us. They want to provide feedback to the government but they like to talk to their neighbour. And it's a great forum for people to discuss local issues as well amongst themselves and get a little more information from everybody across the board.* | Industry sponsor (SI05) |
| Certification | *The auditors simply love our [committee] because they see that as a real connection with the ground of the management unit and the people who live on the forest. And that's obviously a social desire of say some third-party forest management systems.* | Industry sponsor (SI03) |

### 5.2.1 Operating procedures

Over half of sponsors (11) believed their committee had influenced operating procedures in some way. These outcomes were often related to issues of access such as the location of road corridors, road reclamation, and the impact of roads on wildlife in the forest. When asked to discuss a specific example of an outcome influenced by the committee, several sponsors provided outcomes related to road corridors (5) or buffer zones and habitat management in the forest (7). One sponsor described these outcomes as follows:

*Trails is a commonality between almost all stakeholders because you have to get access to whatever it is you're doing. If you're an outfitter you need trails to get your clients to the tree stands. If you're just out in the forest taking pictures you need access to go look at different things. Trappers have trails. There's hiking. Ski-dooing of course in the [Mountains] is a big deal. We have a little bit of cross country skiing and so on and the commonality is trails. Trails and the management of trails is really important. (SI08, industry sponsor*


5.1: Trail management is a key issue in the Hinton FMA
Photo: Amanda Lindgren

Members also described their committee's impact on an operational level. A majority of members interviewed (6) described operational outcomes related to issues such as road maintenance and safety, slash piles in the forest, and changes to cut blocks based on committee

influences. One member noted their committee tended to focus on operational issues with tangible fixes:

> *Yeah, some of these are such big, broad, all-encompassing issues that it's really hard to put your finger on what the changes are. I mean, I can think about most of the concerns that can be addressed right now seem to be operational in nature… I think them being operational allows for some very tangible fixes to the issue. So I think you know, dust control on a road is very easily fixed. There's a way to do it and they know how much money it costs and they can make those decisions. (M07, member)*

### 5.2.2 Forest management planning

Sponsors felt that strategic-level decisions and forest management planning was the area their committees had the most impact on. Fourteen sponsors (82.4%) agreed that their committee had impacted forest management planning in some way. According to sponsors, the most frequent way that committees had influenced planning was through the process of defining values to feed into the objectives, indicators and targets set out in a forest management plan. Values identified by committees were often related to wildlife and ecosystem health, such as managing for moose and caribou, reducing herbicide usage, and maintaining old growth forest. Sponsors described how issues identified by committees translated into objectives within a forest management plan:

> *So we have meetings with the [committee] and Indigenous communities. And at these meetings basically we're developing objectives for our plan. Say they're concerned about moose management on the forest. They want some type of objective to address moose. Not so much population but we manipulate the forest cover… So that's something that we'll be addressing in the plan. So that's something that the [committee] brought forward. They bring forward what they want to see from the forest. And we can't address them all. But either we make an objective or we have to provide a summary of why we can't address certain objectives. (SI12, industry sponsor)*

For members, strategic planning was the area of influence least frequently reported on. Only three members mentioned forest management planning as an important element of their

impact on outcomes. One member explained the process of having input on values for forest management:

> *So we basically highlight areas that we have that we want them to stay out of or specific cultural points, is more or less what it is. And that can be anything from a historical gravesite to a camping location or anything important to the community… That's the most opportunity to change things because essentially they just have a database of values. You know, fish is this, stream is this, the cultural side is this, so if you have the opportunity to influence what that value is or create new ones - versus just complaining about something. (M03, member)*

One sponsor supported this view and explained that discussing Values, Objectives, Indicators, and Targets (VOITs) was the element committee members found least engaging about their committee:

> *And really that's the main avenue that the public has to provide input into the forest management plan at a level where something that they're giving us could actually have an impact to our plan. And they typically don't really like doing it but we still do it. It's just that they're not that keen on it. Because it can be really, really boring and technical. (SI04, industry sponsor)*

Part of the reason that sponsors placed importance on strategic level planning for committees is due to requirements set by planning and certification processes. Sponsors may be required to seek input on values and objectives and to present planning information back to their committees. At the strategic level, committees were also important to sponsors for their role in reviewing and approving annual reports, work schedules, and forest management plans. When asked about the most important issues that their committee had dealt with in the past three years, 11 sponsors included involvement in the forest management process, approving annual reports, or classifying amendments to forest management plans in their responses. One sponsor described the need for formal approval by their committee of the forest management plan:

> *When we're writing before a plan is approved – like a ten-year forest management plan, we'll need a letter of recommendation from the LCC. Where they would support approval*

*of the plan. But I'm not sure if – the last few plans I've been involved with we've always had the support. (SI12, industry sponsor)*

Issue tracking documents from the Hinton FRAG showed a similar focus on the committee reviewing and approving strategic reports such as Sustainable Forest Management Stewardship Reports and receiving information about VOITs in the planning process (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 Examples of approval of strategic-level documents**

| | |
|---|---|
| Detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP) | HWP is in the process of developing a DFMP for submission in 2014. As part of that process HWP has committed to keeping FRAG informed about the status of the plan and to seek feedback where appropriate. |
| General Development Plan (GDP), DFMP, and Stand Tending Plan | In a covering letter dated March 17, 2017, copies of Hinton Wood Products' "2017/18 GDP & Stand Tending Summary Document" were mailed to FRAG members. The covering letter asked FRAG members to contact [Name] if they had any questions or concerns about the GDP or HWP's stand tending activities; or, would like more details regarding any of the information provided. The letter also noted that HWP would be holding an open house on March 16, 2017 in Hinton. |
| Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Stewardship Report | The 2013 SFM Stewardship Report compares and reports on actual objective, indicators, and strategies versus planned ones. Some members commented and their comments were incorporated into the report. |

Source: Hinton FRAG Issue Tracking Documents

### 5.2.3 Corporate culture

The third area of decision making that sponsors were asked about was impacts by the committee on organizational structure or culture. This was the area that sponsors least frequently felt committees had influenced. About half (9) of sponsors agreed their committee had somehow impacted their corporate culture. Interviewees felt that committees had encouraged a culture of collaboration and resulted in stronger relationships between the community and industry. A sponsor highlighted the influence of the committee on their internal corporate culture:

*And that goes all the way through our organization. Not just those that are directly interacting with the group. But certainly those that are on the peripheral that are sort of implementing our operations or supervising our operations on the landscape and so on that when we provide them some new ideas… and we suggest that it came through our public advisory group, then those people are definitely paying attention… And so there is a high level of influence internally within the corporate structure about the advice we're getting from our group. (SI11, industry sponsor)*

While sponsors least frequently mentioned outcomes for corporate culture, this was an area that was important to most members. Seven of nine members interviewed talked about the importance of the committee in relation to more normative outcomes such as keeping the sponsor accountable and demonstrating strong ties to the community:

> *I guess from a culture perspective, I think then being involved with FRAG keeps them accountable. In a good way. And well I think it's doing two things then it's sort of forcibly keeping them accountable, but I think it would ultimately sort of relate to that culture of accountability and you know, and whether or not FRAG continues to exist or not. (M07, member)*

### 5.2.4 Information sharing as an outcome

Nearly all individuals (87.9%, n=29) across all groups of interviewees felt that the provision and sharing of information was an outcome of their committee. While information sharing outcomes did not necessarily result in changes to decision-making, practices or policies, interviewees felt there was value in having increased communication between sponsors, members, and the general public. This theme was prevalent among sponsors, members, and practitioners who viewed information sharing as a valuable role for their committee:

> *So without [the committee], I think that there would be a few people out there that maybe doesn't have the opportunity to find out why is there always the logs on the side of this road? You know, when are they going to do bridge construction here? You know, what are we gonna do about the caribou that keep migrating and the effects that that's going to have on the environment. So it just gives maybe an outlet to collect all that information in a safe environment or like a non-accusatory [way]. (M06, member)*

Participants also commented on the role of information sharing as an outcome of certification and planning processes. One interviewee highlighted the necessity of information provision for certification purposes:

> *So the PAG that [the Company] holds are for information and to make sure that people understand how the FMP process works and what are the specific indicators that [the Company] is focusing on and what are the important aspects of planning they're focusing*

*on and what are the certifications that they follow and why is it important that they protect species at risk or why is it important that or the fact that they are protecting species at risk to this high degree. (M08, member)*

A review of issue tracking documents from the Hinton FRAG revealed that information provision was the most frequent activity engaged in at the committee over time. Informational updates on several topics continued to be of interest to the committee based on an initial information request years ago (Table 5.4). For example, the committee requested annual updates on caribou management in the area as early as 2004 and continued to receive updates on the evolution of the topic in 2018. For other topics, such as herbicides, the committee made initial recommendations to the sponsor several years ago that were adopted in the implementation of herbicide application, and the committee now receives routine updates on this program.

The sponsor supported this theme of information provision, stating that any controversial deliberations had happened mostly in the past or surrounding the development of the most recent forest management plan:

*The stuff that they're most interested in, like where you could get the most interest out of the group is when they're given informational presentations by various experts… most of our interactions with them have been in an informational role where we're just providing them information that they're interested about. (SI04, industry sponsor)*

### 5.2.5 Certification as an outcome

An additional outcome from the committees that emerged from the interviews was to help sponsors achieve and maintain their forest certifications. Eleven sponsors agreed that their committee was involved in and contributing to their certification in some way. In some cases, public advisory committees were a mandatory requirement of certification, as is the case for the CSA SFM Standard, and in others they supplemented certification audits by showing that stakeholders were consulted in forest management processes. One interviewee described the situation as follows:

*The purpose of the PAG is officially it helps [the Company] to achieve its requirements for CSA certification that we have. It's a requirement that we have an official public advisory group that represents all the communities across our forest license area. (SI05, industry sponsor)*

Certification programs may also contribute to outcomes by requiring sponsors to share information with the public and seek approval on specific topics. For example, issue tracking documents showed a sponsor seeking approval for a low-risk assessment of their FSC Controlled Wood certification. In the case of Mistik, achieving FSC certification was viewed as an achievement that would contribute to improved conservation and environmental outcomes on the FMA, as described in Box 5.1.

**Table 5.4 Information sharing topics**

| Issue | Recommendation | Date of Original Recommendation | Status | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Caribou | FRAG members requested information about the Caribou Range Plan (once it was completed). Also wanted updates on it as it becomes implemented. | 2004 | Ongoing | Presentations from various experts from 2004-2018 |
| Mountain Pine Beetle | FRAG members requested information on the status of the mountain pine beetle (MPB) on the FMA and the surrounding areas. | 2005 | Ongoing | Presentations from various experts from 2005-2018 |
| Grizzly Bear | FRAG members requested updates on the grizzly bear research taking place at fRI Research. | 2002 | Ongoing | Presentations from various experts from 2002-2018 |
| Herbicide | FRAG suggested long-term monitoring program for wildlife, would like field trips to sprayed blocks, requested data on vegetation, etc. | 2004 | Ongoing | Field trips, "go-slow" approach in application, annual updates on herbicide program |

Source: Hinton FRAG Issue Tracking documents, 2003-2018

**Box 5.1 The Case for Certification**

For the Mistik PAG, achieving FSC certification was an important outcome. Concerns raised by PAG members were part of the reason that Mistik decided to become the first FSC-certified forest in Saskatchewan in 2007. Environmental groups, in particular, were pleased that Mistik had committed to protecting high conservation areas and species at risk, such as caribou, within the forest management area.

MISTIK MANAGEMENT LTD.

**PRESS RELEASE**

SASKATCHEWAN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY ses

**For Immediate Release**
**January 7, 2008**
**Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan**

**Saskatchewan Forestry Company Gets 'Seal of Approval' From Environmentalists**

Saskatchewan forestry company Mistik Management Ltd. (Mistik) is pleased to announce the certification of its Forest Management Agreement (FMA) area to the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) 2004 National Boreal Standard (Canada) effective November 16, 2007.

One PAG member from the Saskatchewan Environmental Society described their contribution to the FSC certification process like so:

> *"We wanted to work with a forestry company or all the forests companies in Saskatchewan to get FSC certification because we felt that that was the strongest sustainability stamp that could be gotten. And at the time Mistik was the only one that was willing to look at it. [So] our big involvement was getting Mistik to FSC certification." (M09, member)*

The benefits of achieving certification include providing assurance to stakeholders that Mistik is managing the forest in alignment with sound ecological and social sustainability principles. For example, Mistik is currently pursuing the protection of Intact Forest Landscapes through the FSC program and local partnerships.

Being FSC-certified has also prompted Mistik to pursue further partnerships with adjacent forest management areas, First Nations, and environmental non-governmental organizations. Some PAG members have been involved with Mistik's FSC certification for many years now, and the group continues to receive updates on FSC-related projects and standards at each meeting.

### 5.2.6 Significance of outcomes

Although most sponsors identified at least one outcome resulting from the committee's work, there was also a general theme among some interviewees that their committee had not recently experienced any significant outcomes. For example, two sponsors did not identify an example of an outcome influenced by their committee in the past three years:

> *Not that I can be aware of. They would be able to classify and provide their input on classification for an amendment. So they can try to push it to greater public consultation and notification if they wanted to. But in terms of something actually in terms of operating procedures or high-level strategic or organizational structure or culture, I'd say no. (SI06, industry sponsor)*

For others, the outcomes cited were administrative in nature or small adjustments such as refining language in the committee's Terms of Reference. For sponsors, this trend was viewed in a positive light, as it suggested there were no large conflicts on the committee:

> *Like I said to tell the honest truth the only things I've witnessed so far are refinements of language. (SI10, industry sponsor)*

> *Yeah, it wasn't controversial at all. No, like all of our amendments are all pretty minor. They've basically all been administrative. I think for the most part if you're open with them and you explain all the pros and cons of the change that committee are pretty understanding. (SI12, industry sponsor)*

> *Well, I struggled with that because there haven't been big conflicts and it's because of the efforts that [the Company] does… I haven't had big deliberation issues because the dialogue is so ongoing and so transparent that there aren't unsolved issues that end up in the PAG's lap…I can't think of anything right now that has caused something to change course because of what has come up at a PAG meeting. (SG17, government sponsor)*

## 5.3 Contributions to Sustainable Forest Management

Interviewees were also asked about how the work of their committee contributed to sustainability based on the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' SFM framework. These

questions were based on the understanding that SFM means striving to balance social, ecological, and economic factors in the stewardship of forest resources. All 17 sponsors interviewed believed that their committee had contributed to forest sustainability in some way, most commonly through providing diverse views on values in the forest outside of timber. Two sponsors felt that the committee members had done this through the input of social values:

> *The stakeholder committee has always helped provide us with a wider picture. Not just timber but looking at all the ecological goods and services of a forest. And that's been a good model and a good influence that's consistent and stable. (SI08, industry sponsor)*

> *In the past where maybe we may have tended to focus more on cost reduction, the PAG have provided a balanced kind of a viewpoint that also indicated that, yeah, sure, economics are important, but these values which are important from a bit different point of view are also key to consider. (SI14, industry sponsor)*

There was also a connection between certification programs and managing for sustainability. One member noted that maintaining certification helps to assure the committee that the sponsor is managing the forest sustainably:

> *Does the PAG actually contribute to sustainability? I don't think there's that opportunity for the PAG to do that… that's why groups like our environmental group, rather than thinking we have to be part of every PAG and do all this all the time rely on [the Company]'s certification. And we will feel that there's some sort of guarantee that what the company is doing meets all the criteria that environmentalists and industry and First Nations have developed to determine, you know, we have to have faith in that. If we have faith in that process then we have faith that what the company is doing is more or less sustainable. (M09, member)*

Another respondent highlighted committees' contributions to social sustainability but did not feel that these groups had impacted economic or environmental sustainability:

> *The only link I see it having with sustainability is that… it's the sort of the three legs of the proverbial sustainability stool, economic, environmental and social. You know, a good relationship with your local community means you have that social license and that*

*social license, it goes a long way towards sustainability. But I don't think these advisory committees have a huge effect on the environmental or economic sustainability is what I'm saying, because that's not really their purpose. They don't usually have that sort of expertise to contribute (e.g. foresters or economists), and those contributions come from internal company expertise or the regulator. (P07, certifying body)*

Other interviewees viewed building the social connections within committees as a key outcome for sustainability. One interviewee explained how increased communication between forest managers, the committees, and the public contributed to sustainability. As one interviewee explained, PAG members take their understandings of sustainable forest management with them everywhere, including to "coffee talk" at the local coffee houses to help.

Sponsors were also asked about specific outcomes for SFM based on the CCFM criteria and indicators (see Table 5.5). Economic and Social Benefits was the criterion that sponsors most frequently said their committee had influenced (13 of 17), followed by Biological Diversity (8 of 17), Society's Responsibility (7 of 17), and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights (5 of 17). According to sponsors, committees were less influential in the areas of Ecosystem Condition and Productivity, Soil & Water, and Global Ecological Cycles. These criteria are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Table 5.5 Influence of Committees on SFM Criteria, According to Sponsors**

| Criterion | Example of Committee's Influence | # Sponsors that cited this criterion |
|---|---|---|
| Economic and Social Benefits | Tracking dollars spent in local communities; creating opportunities for non-timber harvesting | 13 |
| Biological Diversity | Changing harvest practice to protect moose habitat | 8 |
| Society's Responsibility | Sharing information with broader stakeholder groups | 7 |
| Aboriginal and Treaty Rights | Respecting hunting and fishing rights in the forest | 5 |
| Ecosystem Condition and Productivity | Monitoring reforestation success | 4 |
| Soil & Water | Creating Area of Concern prescription surrounding trout lakes | 2 |
| Role in Global Ecological Cycles | Concerns about how climate change will impact forest health | 1 |

### 5.3.1 Biological Diversity & Ecosystem Health

Biological Diversity was mentioned by about half of all interview participants (15 of 33) as an SFM criterion that was important to their committee. Twelve sponsors cited biological diversity as an issue that was raised by their committee. According to the CCFM (2006), this criterion includes factors such as protecting genetic diversity in forests, maintaining forest habitat and protected areas, and strategies to conserve species at risk. One member explained some of their committee's concerns about genetic diversity in the forest:

> *It's everything from… increasing the component of white pine in our forest. I think we're below the historical norm for our area. So you know, that's a major philosophical issue that's been raised and the company endeavours to address it. (M01, member)*

While many interviewees expressed concern about issues of biological diversity in forest management, there were fewer examples (8) of actual outcomes for biological diversity directly influenced by the committee's input. Outcomes that did stem from concerns about biological diversity were usually related to species at risk and preserving habitat within the forest. For example, one sponsor explained how they had changed specific practices to promote moose habitat partly as a result of the committee's input:

> *We've been told both by Wildlife Branch and the stakeholder committee "What can we do to reduce the amount of roads?" So one of the things we can do is we call it moose layout and it's designed to minimize roads and that's to aggregate harvest and not have the 100 hectare max and not have two pass [harvest] and actually two pass often ends up being three pass. So you've got that road open three times as long as you need to. So everybody on the committee has the same goal of helping the moose wherever possible and so that's why people are willing to say, "Yeah, I agree with this. The current rule is two-pass harvest but can't that rule get changed to allow you to do one-pass harvest to benefit the moose?" So people have the same goal and they also have an open mind as to kind of management by objective. What's the big picture objective? Okay, well that tiny little rule shouldn't stop us from doing what makes sense. (SI08, industry sponsor)*


Plate 5.2: Informational plaque about Forest Stewardship in Hinton, AB.
Photo: Amanda Lindgren

Related to biological diversity are concerns about ecosystem health, which the CCFM (2006) define as the forest's ability to endure and recover from human and natural disturbances such as changing land use, insect infestations, and wildfires. Similar to biological diversity, outcomes related to ecosystem condition and productivity were typically related to the provision of information or simply committees expressing concern for this criterion. A small number of participants (5) cited these types of concerns:

> *[The committee has] a high level of interest in reforestation activities. Reforestation successes. So how is the forest doing? Where are we succeeding? Do we have any areas where we're failing? And we provide them information on an annual basis. They're really interested especially in reforestation success. (SI05, industry sponsor)*

### 5.3.2 Economic & Social Benefits

Another sustainability criterion that interviewees said their committee had impacted was economic and social benefits. More than half of all interviewees (18 of 33) mentioned their committee was concerned with some aspect of economic and social benefits for SFM. This criterion focuses on the contribution of the forest industry to economic metrics such as GDP, employment in forest communities, and the value of non-timber resources like wild berries and mushrooms. Examples of committees' influence on SFM were most frequently related to this criterion; with 13 sponsors stating that they felt their committee had impacted outcomes for economic and social benefits. Indeed, one interviewee described the importance of forestry for sustaining employment in their local community:

> *And our issues are all joined because [the Company] is our biggest employer. [Our Town] doesn't exist the way it exists today without those 700 employees. Right. You know, we're only a community of 10,000 people and 650 or 700 people work at the mill. Right? So we are invested into many of the same issues. (M02, member)*

In addition to direct employment in forestry, committees were also interested in protecting economic resources such as trap lines and harvesting non-timber products like medicinal plants, berries, and mushrooms. Two sponsors explained the impact of their committees in these areas:

> *Probably economic and social benefits is the more likely. So if it's a trapper it's trapping. Marten is the primary – you know fifty to seventy-five per cent of their annual income. So they're always interested in marten and marten habitat and the influence of things on marten. And you talk about climate change or possible climate change and they'll say, "Oh, what would the impact of that be on marten?" (SI08, industry sponsor)*

> *Even simple things like where are the blueberries after the forest fires? Or potentially where the mushroom crop is going to be. So we do things like providing people with maps and direction and that kind of thing to where forest fires were two years ago so people can go and harvest mushrooms so that they can take advantage of those short-term benefits specifically. And it's important that people are involved in the economy of the area and latching onto those short-term opportunities. (SI05, industry sponsor)*

The issue of mountain pine beetle (see Box 5.2) was a prime example of a sustainability concern related to ecosystem health as well as economic and social sustainability in Hinton, AB.

**Box 5.2 Addressing Mountain Pine Beetle in Hinton, AB**

The issue of mountain pine beetle is a critical threat to the condition and productivity of forests in Canada. All members interviewed from the Hinton FRAG expressed concern about mountain pine beetle affecting the health of the forest and the negative impacts it might bring to their community. Sponsors provided regular reports to the committee on the status of mountain pine beetle infestations across Canada.

In Hinton, a Pine Beetle Advisory Committee was also formed with the support of the FRAG sponsor and the committee. This led to the advancement of a National Strategy for Mountain Pine Beetle championed by the local, provincial and national Chambers of Commerce to lobby for national funding to address pine beetle across Canada. Though these outcomes took place outside of committee processes, support and information from the company sponsor was key to advancing these efforts.

Interviewees also mentioned the intersections of environmental and economic concerns for sustainability with respect to mountain pine beetle, stating their concern not only for the economic livelihood of local forest industry, but also concerns about the health of forest ecosystems and social impacts to nearby townsite and National Park in Jasper.

Beetle-infected pine tree in Hinton, AB
Photo: Amanda Lindgren

*And it's important from an environment perspective, but it has some very critical pieces from a business perspective for [the Company] and I think that issue seems to be affecting, I mean, that has consequences for every partner around the table really. (M07, member)*

### 5.3.3 Society's Responsibility

The concept of Society's Responsibility includes ensuring adequate consultation with Indigenous peoples in forest management as well as the premise that the management of public lands should reflect social values held by local communities (CCFM 2006). Seven sponsors agreed that their committee had contributed to fulfilling the criterion of Society's Responsibility, and five sponsors reported that their committee was working towards respecting Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. Sponsors explained that meeting society's responsibility for SFM was achieved by ensuring communication between committees and the public:

> *So we use the LCC as one way to communicate to the general public what we're doing right and be transparent about what we're doing. We also take feedback from the LCC in terms of their concerns and that does have an influence on how we manage our forest and how we change and how we provide information. How we communicate information. It's really around that most importantly. (SI13, industry sponsor)*

Sponsors also acknowledged the need to consult with and accommodate Indigenous peoples in support of SFM. The sponsors who spoke about outcomes for this criterion emphasized the unique relationships necessary to respect Indigenous rights in the forest:

> *And there was some concerns about how much information we would be sharing publicly regarding our discussions with First Nations. So we changed [the indicator statement] slightly to ensure that we're tracking that when we do get communication from First Nations that we respond. That there's accommodation but that the details aren't provided. (SG01, government sponsor)*

> *It's not really new to CSA but they've actually added it as an element now so Aboriginal rights and treaty rights are respected and our awareness of them is front and centre. And a lot of the issues regarding the land and the opportunity to use the land the way that they see fit for their own cultural activities. So it's been important for a really long time for us to ensure we maintain those relationships and they are involved in decision making as well. (SI05, industry sponsor)*

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter has presented results related to my second and third objectives, which were to identify different levels of outcomes from FACs processes, including contributions to SFM. These results are based on interviewees' perceptions of the outcomes their committee had influenced as well as supporting documents.

Perceptions of committees' influence on outcomes were varied, with about half of sponsors (9) characterizing the committee as having a positive impact on forest management. One sponsor felt their committee had actually negatively influenced outcomes in the forest, and eight interviewees felt the influence of the committee had either been marginal or plateauing over time. Nearly all interviewees mentioned user groups as effectively influencing outcomes for forest management. Indigenous peoples were the most frequently mentioned group, viewed by 21 interviewees as having an impact on outcomes in the forest in some way.

Findings showed that for sponsors, outcomes relating to strategic decisions were most frequently mentioned. Fourteen sponsors described examples of strategic-level outcomes such as approving annual reports or providing input for forest management plans. For members, outcomes related to corporate culture were most frequently mentioned. Seven members talked about the importance of sponsors' demonstrating their commitment to the community, being transparent about decisions, and communicating in an accessible manner with the public. Overall, operating procedures were the most frequently raised area of influence for committees, with 24 interviewees providing examples of changes in access, recreation and practices in the forest based upon committee feedback.

Though interviewees were not directly asked about this issue, information sharing emerged as an important theme for nearly all interviewees (29 of 33). Information sharing outcomes emphasized the relevance of two-way communication and committee members' relationships with broader stakeholder groups. Issue tracking documents also showed that information provision by the sponsor and other experts was a strong focus for committees over time. Similarly, 11 sponsors said that achieving and maintaining certification programs were outcomes for their committee.

All sponsors interviewed believed that their committee had contributed to advancing sustainability outcomes in the forest. Results showed these outcomes to be largely in the realm of social sustainability and providing social input to forest management processes. Sponsors said

their committees had mostly influenced outcomes for Economic and Social Benefits (13), Biological Diversity (8), Society's Responsibility (7), and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights (5).

Analysis showed a tension between committees expressing concern for a particular issue and influencing substantive outcomes related to that topic. For example, while 15 interviewees suggested that concerns about biological diversity were being discussed at their committee, only 8 "outcomes" for biological diversity were described. These outcomes often included elements of information sharing and committees requesting to be kept abreast of ongoing concerns for biological diversity such as caribou and moose habitat rather than habitat protection *per se*. Overall, strategic-level outcomes such as certification and formal approval processes appeared to be most important for sponsors, while members were most concerned with operational outcomes such as access, recreation, and sponsors demonstrating their commitment to the local community.

This chapter has summarized results about outcomes from FAC processes. Taken together with the previous chapter on process criteria for committee effectiveness, these results can inform a discussion of FACs as they relate to governance and sustainability more broadly. These topics will be taken up in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER SIX

# 6.0 DISCUSSION

The previous two chapters presented results related to perceptions of process and outcome effectiveness of FACs as gathered from interviews with sponsors, members and practitioners, and document review. This chapter discusses these findings in relation to survey data and existing literature, as well as implications for the practice of public participation in environmental management. The first section considers how this study characterized effectiveness for the FAC model of public participation from the perspective of process and outcome criteria. The second section discusses the emphasis on local-level sustainability outcomes as well as the relevance of SFM criteria. Lastly, this chapter explores the FAC model for collaborative environmental governance and makes specific recommendations to improve committee processes.

## 6.1 Process as Effectiveness

Measuring effectiveness of public participation efforts has proven to be a consistent challenge, with multiple conceptualizations of effectiveness presented in the literature (Chess 2000; Reed et al. 2018; Nenko et al. 2019b). This study relied on the idea that evaluation criteria for public participation can be roughly divided into those relating to elements of process, and those related to outcomes (Conley and Moote 2003; Koontz et al. 2019). This thesis attempted to explore both process and outcome criteria for effectiveness of FACs. One of the most important overall findings from this study is the strong emphasis on process criteria contributing to perceptions of effectiveness, rather than outcomes.

Reviews of empirical research on collaborative natural resource management (Reed 2008; Ansell and Gash 2008; Koontz et al. 2019) indicate that evaluations of process take place more frequently than outcome evaluations. Indeed, results in Chapter 4 showed that process criteria were mentioned almost twice as often as outcome criteria in participants' definitions of effectiveness. Coding from both interviews and documents referenced process criteria 595 times, while codes for outcome criteria created just 334 references. Sponsors' ratings of their committee's effectiveness were, on average, higher (4.38/5) than their ratings of the committee's influence (3.48/5), suggesting that perceptions of effectiveness were not directly tied to levels of influence, but rather other, process-oriented factors.

This finding is supported by recent statistical analysis of the views of FAC participants by Nenko and colleagues (2019b). They found that members' satisfaction with elements of procedural justice, or process, was a strong predictor of their views on committee effectiveness and satisfaction more generally, even more so than satisfaction with distributive justice, or fairness in outcomes. Hunt (2015) also found that LCC members in Ontario reported the highest levels of satisfaction with statements about fairness of process. This finding mirrors comments made by research participants, one of whom confirmed that "*it's more about how is the committee built and functioning that will determine if it's effective at what it's role is in the process*" (SI03). This study therefore supports Hunt's contention that committees appear to exhibit the "fair process effect" where outcomes are viewed positively as long as processes to achieve those outcomes are believed to be fair.

### 6.1.1 Identifying key process criteria

The process criteria most frequently mentioned by interviewees were responsiveness, governance, representation, enduring membership, and member knowledge. Many of the process criteria that were important to research participants echoed those identified in the literature, such as member satisfaction, representation, and responsiveness of the sponsoring agency (Beckley et al. 2005; CCFM 2006; Conley and Moote 2003). For example, George and Reed (2017) discussed how achieving a broad range of representation within stakeholder models of environmental governance contributes to procedural justice. Similarly, 21 research participants spoke about the importance of inviting diverse and balanced representation to their committee table.

Achieving adequate Indigenous representation in FAC processes has been a longstanding theme in the literature (Nenko et al. 2019a; Parkins et al. 2006), and this thesis confirmed that this challenge remains. Twelve participants felt that Indigenous representation was a barrier for the effectiveness of their committee, and described the inadequacies of committee processes to fully address the rights and processes of Indigenous peoples (see Section 4.3.2). In the cases of both the Hinton FRAG and Mistik PAG, Indigenous nations were negotiating forest management concerns outside of FAC process, both directly with sponsors and through government-mandated consultation processes. This finding seems to align with the observation of Ansell and Gash (2008) that stakeholders (and rightsholders) who feel their concerns will be better met in an alternative venue, such as courts or legislative proceedings, may feel disincentivized to

participate in collaborative processes. The lack of Indigenous representation on committees is particularly problematic given that a majority of interviewees also reported Indigenous peoples as having significant and growing influence on forest management in their area.

Female representation has also been raised as a problematic issue for FACs in previous research (Khanal 2018; Reed and Varghese 2007); however, none of the participants in this study viewed women's representation as a concern for their committee.

This study revealed that having enduring and knowledgeable memberships were two of the top process criteria for research participants. Having an established committee of longstanding members was the most frequent criterion mentioned by sponsors as being important for effectiveness. This result speaks to the importance of commitment to the process, emphasized by Ansell and Gash (2008) as a necessary component of successful collaboration. Members of the committees appreciated the opportunity to share knowledge with each other, and to become informed about the happenings of their own forest communities. As member stakeholders gained knowledge about forest management, they were able to contribute to enhanced decision-making (Beierle 2002), and gain knowledge about technical processes that they may share with others (Sinclair et al. 2008). However, some participants also acknowledged the drawbacks associated with long-standing members who become entrenched in particular points of view and are less open to new ways of doing things.

Member satisfaction was another key component of measuring process effectiveness, especially for sponsors. In their study, Nenko and colleagues (2019b) demonstrated that FAC members surveyed in 2016 rated satisfaction and effectiveness fairly consistently in relation to several independent variables, suggesting that these two terms might be interchangeable in the minds of survey respondents. These findings help to explain the fairly high levels of satisfaction and effectiveness found in national surveys of committee members in the absence of influential outcomes resulting from committees (Parkins et al. 2006; Lindgren et al. in press).

Elements of "good governance" such as having a clear Terms of Reference, strong facilitator, and reviewing the mandate of the committee may be considered the quintessential process criteria. These aspects of committee process were the second-most mentioned by participants in relation to effectiveness, and find resonance in the literature around successful collaboration (Armitage et al. 2012; Johannson et al. 2018). Together with the criteria discussed

above, these top process criteria raised by research participants were largely in accordance with the themes raised in the literature.

### 6.1.2 Rationales for public participation

Process was important to all groups of interviewees, but particularly to sponsors. All sponsors mentioned one or more process criteria in their definitions of effectiveness, while members and practitioners were more evenly split between process and outcome criteria (see Section 4.1.2). This finding supports Wesselink et al.'s (2011) assertion that the views of public participation conveners may differ from participants in the process. Indeed, sponsors rated the effectiveness of their own committees substantially higher (87.6%) than the nationally reported average for surveyed members (71.0%).

The emphasis on process among sponsors speaks to rationales for public participation more broadly. Views of effectiveness will clearly be influenced by what participants believe is the aim of the participation itself. For example, some sponsors felt that by simply achieving the process of having an advisory committee, they had met their obligations for public engagement as set forth by certification requirements or legislation. This finding appears to agree with Wesselink et al.'s (2011) assertion that conveners may undertake public participation due to a "legalistic rationale", where fulfilling mandated requirements is the main purpose of the participation. At times, the focus on process was also viewed by sponsors in an instrumental way, where having an FAC helped to smooth operations in the forest by distributing information more efficiently to community stakeholders and providing a venue for learning about forest management issues.

However, members' views seemed to align more closely with a normative rationale for being on the committee, where the focus is on ensuring fairness and procedural justice within participation processes (George and Reed 2017). This was demonstrated by responsiveness, a sense of being listened to and having their voices heard, being the most frequently cited process criteria by members interviewed. Outcomes for corporate culture were also the type most frequently mentioned by members (see 5.2.3), suggesting that a strong relationship with the committee sponsor is perhaps the most important factor for members' perceptions of effectiveness and satisfaction. Robson and Rosenthal (2014) similarly found that responsiveness of the sponsoring agency was a key component for success according to members of Ontario LCCs. Indeed, scholars (Stewart and Sinclair 2007; Beierle and Cayford 2001) view

responsiveness and sincerity by the lead agency as an important factor for the success of participation processes. These findings highlight the themes of interdependence and trust between practitioners of public participation and stakeholder groups that are found in the literature (Beierle and Cayford 2001; Ansell and Gash 2008; McGurk et al. 2006).

The tension between sponsors' and members' rationales for having an effective process speaks to the relevance of power relations as an explanatory factor for the effectiveness of public participation (Reed et al. 2018). For sponsors, process as an outcome may mean doing their due diligence to ensure a forest management plan or certification process can move forward smoothly, while for members, an effective process is a chance for them to express their concerns and make their voices heard by those with decision-making power. These differences help explain the dissatisfaction among some members that current processes in forestry are not producing much public influence (Miller and Nadeau 2017), and are key to understanding the need to create more meaningful participation experiences for members of the public.

### 6.1.3 Process as outcome

The strong focus on process criteria and the emergence of information sharing and relationship building as important outcomes of FACs suggest that for this study, process itself can be viewed as an outcome. Even results related to outcome criteria seemed to stress elements of process. For example, information sharing emerged from the data as a key component of FAC activities and was the most frequently cited outcome by interviewees (see 5.1.4). Participants often saw value in their committee being a place to learn about other interests in the forest, to exchange information with other stakeholders, and to simply learn more about forest management. Such communicative and instrumental learning outcomes have been associated with other participatory processes such as environmental assessment (Sinclair et al. 2008).

Relationship-building from FAC processes was another key outcome encapsulated by process criteria like responsiveness of the sponsor, trust, and enduring membership. For Mistik PAG members, the relationship built between the company and local communities was central to their overall positive assessment of the group. They had a history of good relations with Mistik, and felt the company was open to hearing their concerns. This meant they were, in general, quite satisfied with the PAG's efforts. The survey data similarly reported learning how to work with people from different viewpoints as a key outcome of FAC processes, with 73.8% of members saying deliberations had become easier over time (Lindgren et al. in press). This finding echoes

the assertions of Beckley et al. (2005) that forest advisory committees are useful for building personal and institutional relationships between a sponsoring agency and members of the public, as compared to other forms of public participation like open houses or surveys. Previous research on FACs (Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau 2010; McGurk et al. 2006) has also found building trust and establishing relationships with other participants to be positive outcomes.

In the absence of other substantial outcomes influenced by committees, process itself becomes a form of outcome in the minds of many interviewees. This is reflected in high satisfaction rates among sponsors and members alike. That is, if committees have successfully achieved relevant elements of process criteria, participants view their committee as effective. Affecting other types of outcomes, such as environmental or economic impacts, is simply less of a focus for most committees, according to interviewees.

This finding challenges the emphasis on separating process from outcomes presented by Conley and Moote (2003) and others (Koontz et al. 2019; Koontz and Thomas 2006). At minimum, it reinforces the importance of social outputs of environmental participation. Indeed, if process is the outcome for both participants and conveners of public participation efforts, perhaps this helps to explain the focus on measuring inputs, process criteria, and social outcomes that is so prevalent in the literature rather than a focus on outputs and environmental outcomes. This is not to suggest that measuring ecological outputs from collaborative processes is unimportant. Many forest managers and communities are deeply interested in contributing to and measuring long-term forest sustainability. Rather, this study emphasizes the perception that, for many participants, feeling a sense of satisfaction with the process they are involved in is more significant than assessing long-term impacts.

### 6.2 Sustainability Outcomes

This thesis aimed to address the challenge of documenting outcomes from FACs as well as elements of process. In particular, contributions to Sustainable Forest Management were of interest, based on the set of priorities and indicators established by the CCFM (2006). As noted by several scholars (Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau 2010; McGurk et al. 2006), assessing outcomes from FAC processes is not a straightforward task. This research used the SFM criteria as a framework for categorizing outcomes according to which criterion they most closely addressed. Following from Margerum (2008), outcomes were also analyzed in terms of

operational, strategic, and normative levels. These results confirm that FACs help to achieve local-level social sustainability, and provide insight on sustainability metrics more broadly.

### 6.2.1 Towards Social Sustainability

Advisory committees are designed to play a role in fulfilling the social aspect of sustainability's three-legged stool consisting of environmental, social, and economic domains (Beckley et al. 2005; CCFM 2006). It is unsurprising then that interviewees highlighted the importance of social sustainability in their responses about SFM. Indeed, the number one reason for participating in an FAC according to nationally-surveyed members was to contribute to SFM (Lindgren et al. in press). Nearly all interviewees felt that their committee was contributing to SFM by achieving a level of social license within the community, incorporating social values into forest management plans, and keeping stakeholders informed of forestry issues.

Most sponsors felt their committee had influenced outcomes for the criterion of economic and social benefits. While biological diversity and ecosystem health were also important issues to respondents, outcomes matching these criteria were less frequent. This reflects the finding of Koontz et al. (2019) that the ecological outputs of social processes are less commonly reported, perhaps because they are difficult to measure empirically, but also perhaps because they are occurring less frequently than the tangible social and economic outcomes that are relevant to participants of the committee. Within the criterion of economic and social benefits, several participants identified beneficial outcomes such as coordinating berry picking and medicinal plant harvesting within the forest. These findings also demonstrate an emphasis by committee members on the value of non-timber resources and diverse forest users (Kramkowski and Mulivhill 2017).

Just one sponsor mentioned the SFM criterion related to global ecological cycles in relation to their committee's work. This agrees with recent survey findings that FAC agendas do not focus very strongly on climate change (Lindgren et al. in press), but it is curious given that concern about climate change is reportedly higher among forestry stakeholders than the general Canadian public (Ameztegui et al. 2018). One explanation for this discrepancy is offered by the same study, where Ameztegui and colleagues found that industry respondents were the least concerned about the impacts of climate change among all stakeholder groups, and expressed the least agreement with the need to adapt forestry practices for climate change. Johnston et al. (2011) also suggested that forest managers were concerned about climate change but needed to

develop significant adaptive and scientific capacity to be better equipped to respond to it. Therefore, it is possible that from sponsors' standpoint, climate change is not viewed as a pressing issue at the committee table and so does not receive great attention on meeting agendas. Alternatively, it may be that since the issue of climate change holds various normative implications, it does not neatly fit into the strategic or operational issues FACs have been found to influence more routinely.

### 6.2.2 Local-level sustainability

One touted advantage of FACs and SFM more generally is the ability to incorporate local input into forestry management, thereby increasing the relevance and sustainability of forest practices (CCFM 2006). The introduction of local level indicators within the federal SFM program is one example of this, where local stakeholders participate in creating relevant indicators for their forest management area. Parkins et al. (2016) suggested that industry partners used local level indicators strategically to advance market-based certification schemes and to bolster their efforts to demonstrate SFM practices. This is consistent with the finding that for FAC sponsors interviewed, the most common example of local input from the committee was providing feedback into setting values and objectives for forest management planning, followed by supporting certification processes (see 5.1.2). Strategic outcomes such as approving plans and annual reports were also more prevalent according to sponsors than outcomes at the operational or normative level. Meanwhile, strategic outcomes were the least frequently mentioned by members, suggesting that sponsors find more value in setting values, objectives, indicators and targets than do members of the committees. These findings agree with the assertion of Manetti (2011) that firms often engage stakeholders as a way of legitimizing their efforts in sustainability reporting.

While strategic input into plans was viewed as important to committee sponsors, examples of operational outcomes were the most frequently mentioned across all groups of interviewees. These outcomes were often associated with changes in access to the forest such as road location and bridges, or recreation activities such as trail maintenance for ATVs or buffer zones for tourism operators. Similarly, examples of outcomes effectively influenced from the national survey of FAC members included numerous mentions of road access, water crossing and buffer zones, and accommodating different users of the forest as some of the top responses (Lindgren et al. in press). This finding mirrors that of McGurk et al.'s (2006) study, where the

authors found Manitoba committees were able to influence site-specific decisions but lacked bearing on more strategic or normative choices.

Together, these results suggest that, as in conceptualizations of effectiveness, there is a tension between the types of outcomes valued by sponsors and members. Sponsors were more likely to view strategic input into planning and certification processes as important outcomes, while members more frequently saw their influence on local issues of access and recreation as the most important issues the committee had dealt with in recent years. These differences fit Margerum's description of action versus policy-oriented collaboratives; where sponsors may be more focused on strategic-level decisions, while member stakeholders have a local-level focus because they "work for a local industry, they farm in the area, they own land in the area, or they have a personal concern about the issues being addressed," (2008, 493).

### 6.2.3 Assessing meaningful participation for sustainability

Given the multiple calls for re-assessing FAC processes found in the literature (McGurk et al. 2006; Parkins et al. 2006; Miller and Nadeau 2017), it is relevant to comment on whether current methods of assessing public participation for SFM are sufficient. This research found that the SFM criteria are still recognized by committee sponsors, but often in a cursory way. Both industry and government sponsors were rightfully more focused on the criteria and indicators necessary for them to first, meet regulatory requirements, and second, achieve certification standards. One interesting finding from this research is that because the SFM criteria are intimately tied to the CSA Z809 Sustainable Forest Management standard, emphasis on the SFM system has fallen away as companies shift away from CSA towards other certifications like SFI. As one representative from SFI explained, there might be several reasons for this, including the support for product branding and marketing offered by other certifications, as well as added value from research and education programs. Another industry sponsor described how SFM indicators were dictated largely by provincial government requirements, making the CCFM criteria less relevant to their work than provincial manuals.

Beyond concerns over matching SFM criteria to certification and legislative requirements, a larger question surrounding the efficacy of current indicators for meaningful participation ought to be raised. In 2010, Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau called for the evolution of forestry participation indicators to move beyond "simple participant satisfaction" and undertake a more systematic approach to evaluating participatory efforts. They acknowledged

the methodological difficulties associated with such efforts, but suggested, as did Koontz et al. (2019), the design of logic models or evaluation grids incorporating multiple variables relevant to strong participatory processes. Nenko et al. (2019b) also commented on the need to broaden SFM indicators to include at least some measure of diversity and fairness on committees. However, current indicators for participation used by the CCFM and certification bodies have remained largely static. Many sponsors reported using member satisfaction surveys, and indeed the presence of the committee itself, to fulfill legislative and third-party requirements for the public engagement aspect of sustainable forest management. In the words of one interviewee, "*neither FSC or SFI to my knowledge other than "Okay, is there a functional advisory committee as the law requires? Yes? Okay, finished. You pass on that criteria*." This research therefore adds to the call for more robust measures of public engagement and the development of indicators that portray a deeper meaning of meeting society's responsibility for forest management, including consideration of both process and outcome variables.

## 6.3 Considerations Moving Forward

The final objective of this research was to develop recommendations to improve FAC processes moving forward. Many of the suggestions brought forward by research participants involved supplying better supports for members and sponsors of committees, such as increased training, independent facilitation, and stronger recruitment methods. Many of these ideas have already been raised by previous studies during the last fifteen years (Parkins et al. 2006; McGurk et al. 2006; Lindgren et al. in press). These suggestions are summarized in the first two sections as considerations for renewing and reimagining committee processes. Concrete, specific recommendations are offered at the end of this section.

### 6.3.1 Renewing committee processes

Committee renewal was a major theme among participants. They suggested that recruiting and training new members, introducing expertise from other sources, and reviewing governance processes like terms of reference were common challenges for committees. The need to rejuvenate committees with diverse voices and new ways of thinking about forest management has been clearly stated (McGurk et al. 2006; George and Reed 2017). For sponsors, finding "good people" with a willingness to participate on the committee and bringing them up to speed on forest management processes was the challenge most frequently mentioned (see 5.3.1). Longstanding, knowledgeable members were also highly valued by sponsors in their evaluations

of effectiveness. Hunt (2015) noted that while members gained satisfaction and knowledge the longer they remained on Ontario committees, this led to overrepresentation of older members. This assertion is further demonstrated by data showing that based on 2004 and 2016 survey responses, agreement increased among FAC members that the process was effective, coinciding with a rise in the length of membership and average age of members (Parkins et al. 2006; Lindgren et al. in press). While increased satisfaction and knowledge are positive outcomes for these members, this also poses a problem with respect to recruiting and incorporating new members onto committees. Further, too much privileging of existing expertise can lead to the professionalization of committees, contradicting the intent of citizen-oriented participation (Parkins and Sinclair 2014).

Some participants expressed the desire to recruit more members with diverse, backgrounds who may have little or no knowledge of forestry and might therefore bring different viewpoints to the table. Sponsors suggested tools such as online engagement and social media might be used to solicit productive feedback from new and younger voices, especially given the older composition of many committees. One sponsor detailed recent efforts to monitor how well members of the committee were communicating FAC business to their stakeholder groups in hopes of raising the profile of their committee in the local community. These comments coincide with methods suggested by Parkins and Sinclair (2014) to broaden tools for involvement in participatory processes and challenge the tendency towards elitism in environmental governance.

Survey data show that underrepresentation of groups such as Indigenous peoples and women on FACs persists, and has not improved appreciably since 2004 (Khanal 2018). A majority of committees surveyed (81%) reported having no fixed term for members, providing little incentive to support healthy member turnover (Lindgren et al. in press). Members also reported high levels of post-secondary education in 2016, and significant affiliations with the natural resource industry and community organizations, suggesting a professionalization of committee membership. Taken with responses from participants about their desire to recruit new people and better incorporate the perspectives of youth, Indigenous people, and everyday citizens, it is clear that more significant efforts are needed to revitalize committee membership.

However, sponsors and members clearly valued the knowledge-sharing function of committees and viewed the uptake of new members and new knowledge to be a barrier at times. Robson and Rosenthal (2014) found that information complexity and process complexity were

significant barriers to successful forest management planning in Ontario. Indeed, government-sponsored committees (mainly found in Ontario in this study) seemed to possess a higher degree of process complexity at times due to the prescriptive nature of their mandate. Interviewees suggested additional training and mentoring programs for committee members as a method to help induct new members to the complex forest management planning process. In this respect, government-sponsored committees may hold a potential advantage, as their training processes appeared to be more formalized than industry-led committees. Several participants mentioned that opportunities to spend time in the forest aided in their understanding of forest management. Field trips therefore might be an important venue for the informal, experiential learning that can help advance individual and collective learning for sustainability (Sinclair et al. 2008).

### 6.3.2 Reimagining the FAC model

A serious finding of this research is the overall sense that members, practitioners, and even sponsors found the scope of the committee's work to be limited at times. Even among committees where members were fairly satisfied, such as the Hinton FRAG and Mistik PAG, members felt there might be more opportunities to provide direct feedback to decision-makers. About half (56.3%) of nationally surveyed FAC members agreed that the effectiveness of their committee could be improved somehow, with greater involvement in decision-making one of the main suggestions brought forward by members (Lindgren et al. in press). Just 51.0% of members surveyed said that they trusted forest managers to make the right choices for forest management (Lindgren et al. in press). These results only strengthen previous claims to evaluate the appropriateness of the FAC model in terms of actual influence on decision-making (McGurk et al. 2006; Martineau-Delisle and Nadeau 2010; Robson and Rosenthal 2014). Combined with the heavy emphasis on process criteria identified by all participants, and limited evidence of outcomes influenced (even by committees that scored highly on survey questions related to outcome effectiveness) the findings of this research raise questions about the efficacy of FACs as truly participatory bodies.

The emergence of information sharing as a key outcome for participants indicates that the FAC model is situated on the informing and consultation rungs of Arnstein's ladder of participation, within the category of "tokenism," rather than engaging in partnerships with elements of shared decision-making. The emphasis of sponsors on certification requirements and approval of strategic documents reveals that a good deal of rubberstamping may occur on

committees where managers use the presence of the committee to placate demands for public involvement (Manetti 2011). In the words of one FAC member, "*the sponsor supports the committee because it is a requirement of [certification] but I am unsure the sponsor genuinely takes the committee's advice,*" (Lindgren et al. in press).

Advocates of participatory processes have been arguing for more deliberative discourse and shared decision-making power with local people for many years. Indeed, many of the committees involved in this study began operating in the 1990s-early 2000s and now have an established, routine presence in their community. As forest and natural resource management continue to evolve, expectations for public governance are shifting as well. For example, several participants talked about the changing technologies used to engage the public today, and questioned whether formal committee meetings are the best (or most cost-efficient) way to achieve participation. In fact, increasing public disengagement was a concern for sponsors and members hoping to induce greater involvement in their committee.

With these limitations in mind, it is worth exploring ways to better manage power dynamics within existing structures that could empower more deliberative processes. While many sponsors valued smoothness of process and viewed having limited conflict on committees as a positive, some interviewees also recognized the challenges associated with increased familiarity on committees. As one sponsor suggested, "*Maybe we should have people that don't agree with us*." Certainly, investing in new deliberative tactics will require increased resources from governments, companies, and individual members to commit time, money, and enthusiasm towards new processes. Survey data indicated that the time spent in discussion and debate at committee meetings has declined since 2004, suggesting opportunities to revitalize this practice. Independent facilitation of meetings would be a step forward for many groups, given that just one-third of FACs surveyed in 2016 used third-party facilitators at their meetings. Such an investment may be costly but necessary if committees are to improve their ability to practice deliberation and engage in "tough conversations," (P04).

A shift away from seeking consensus and familiarity on committees may be one way to encourage productive debate about intractable issues. For example, Johannson et al. (2018) investigated the use of structured decision-making (SDM) for negotiating forest management in Sweden. The authors found certain elements of the SDM process to be positive for participants, including the impact of a highly trained facilitator, guided step-by-step process for exploring

decision alternatives, and the emphasis on seeking information and understanding rather than consensus. Parkins and Sinclair (2014) also advocate for more deliberative strategies that encourage debate, constructive conflict, and action from governance models, including more activist approaches. The implications of this discussion are taken up further in Chapter 7.

### 6.3.3 Specific Recommendations for Strengthening FACs

Given the suggestions made by interviewees and the literature, the following recommendations are made to improve existing FAC processes. Recommendations begin with aspects of procedure and move towards more deliberative elements.

*Strengthen efforts to recruit diverse membership on committees.* The variety of members represented on committees should include youth, Indigenous peoples, women, and people with less professionalized backgrounds. Formal on-boarding processes and mentorship opportunities could help ease the transition onto the committee for new members. Partnering with local educational institutions was an idea mentioned by participants to encourage youth membership.

*Renew committee membership over time*. Consider term limits for members to support turnover of members over time. Create mechanisms for regular reviews of committee membership.

*Review committee processes regularly*. Ensure that members have a clear understanding of their role on the committee. Follow up on mandates to renew the terms of reference. Groups should consider what type of formal or informal meeting design works best for their group dynamic.

*Learn together about emerging forest issues and reduce information complexity.* Continue to provide members with information about emerging forest science and work to make complex problems accessible. Use field trips as opportunities to reinforce learning outcomes for members and to encourage feelings of connection to the forest and each other.

*Focus on building meaningful relationships.* A good relationship between committee sponsors and members was the foundation for effective committee processes. Showing members that their feedback is heard and responded to encourages members to participate with enthusiasm and builds satisfaction and trust. Providing support to members through meals, accommodations, and

travel reimbursements demonstrates commitment and places value on time volunteered. Relationship building with Indigenous peoples is of particular importance for learning how to build committee processes that appropriately address their concerns.

*Support deliberation within the committee*. Facilitation is key for allowing constructive deliberation and working towards consensus or other objectives. Bringing in outside speakers, encouraging discussion of dissenting opinions, and providing time on the committee agenda for debate can also help to achieve this.

*Broaden the reach of committees within local communities*. Use tools such as social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) and awareness campaigns to increase the profile of committees with local citizens and encourage dialogue between committee members and their constituent groups. A broader reach may also contribute to recruitment efforts. Consider incorporating reporting mechanisms for members to explain how they have disseminated the information shared at meetings with others.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter offers conclusions and further comments on the future of FACs as participatory forest governance structures. First, I provide conclusions related to each objective of the research. Next, the contributions of this thesis to the literature and practice of environmental public participation are summarized. The thesis concludes with some final remarks, including possibilities for future research.

## 7.1 Conclusions by Objective

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of FACs in Canada, and to assess their impact on outcomes for advancing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). A mixed methods approach using quantitative survey data, telephone and personal interviews, document review and observation was used to collect data to answer four objectives as described below.

Objective 1: To characterize understandings of process and outcome criteria for the effectiveness for FACs.

*Key Conclusion: Process makes perfect for effective FACs.*

Effectiveness was most often considered in terms of process-related criteria such as responsiveness of the sponsor, having a longstanding and knowledgeable membership, and adequate representation on committees. The committee's ability to influence outcomes was considered much less so in participants' characterizations of effectiveness, especially for sponsors. This suggests that, for sponsors, effectiveness is a function of achieving a strong process, more so than having an influence on outcomes or decision-making. Since effectiveness is tied to process, and not outcomes, having a strong process was viewed as an outcome in itself for committee participants.

Objective 2: Identify policy areas, management decisions, or specific practices that have been influenced by FAC recommendations.

*Key Conclusion: While FACs hold strategic value for sponsors, their influence on forest management outcomes was limited to minor, operational changes.*

Outcomes influenced by committees at any level were fairly minimal, suggesting the level of influence afforded most FACs was low. Outcomes influenced were nonexistent or minor, such as local-level changes to do with access and recreational uses of the forest, and sharing information about forest-related issues. Sponsors saw particular value in the strategic activities FACs participated in, suggesting that committees play an important role in legitimizing the public engagement efforts of the forest industry for regulatory and certification purposes.

Objective 3: Explore the extent to which Forest Advisory Committees have influenced Sustainable Forest Management practices and policies.

*Key Conclusion: FACs did not significantly advance SFM practices, according to the CCFM criteria.*

FACs had limited influence on outcomes that demonstrably advanced SFM. While committees expressed particular concern for issues such as the economic and social dimensions of sustainability and biodiversity, few outcomes considerably advanced or changed existing SFM practices. Participants who viewed certification requirements and legislative mandates as more impactful than the SFM framework also questioned the relevance of current SFM indicators, underlining the need to reimagine indicators and governance models for public participation in SFM.

Objective 4: Develop recommendations to improve the effectiveness of FACs for advancing SFM.

*Key Conclusion: The FAC model merits significant revision in light of continuing concerns about the inability of public feedback to influence and improve decision-making for SFM.*

Participants who were concerned about the limited scope of FACs often commented on the influence of certification and legislative processes in shaping committee processes instead. Even on highly effective committees where members reported high levels of satisfaction, some participants worried about the quality and depth of deliberation on committees, suggesting the need to explore alternative models of public forest governance, including culturally relevant ways to appropriately engage with Indigenous peoples.

A series of recommendations were made to improve existing committee processes, including procedural improvements such as recruitment and training of members, reviewing

terms of reference regularly, and encouraging stronger relationships between committee members and broader stakeholder groups. A greater focus on learning outcomes, building meaningful relationships and supporting deliberation rather than consensus on committees were also suggested.

### 7.2 Contributions of the thesis

This research contributes to the evaluation of public participation in environmental management in three main ways. First, this study was novel because it focused on the perceptions of government and industry sponsors, and not only participants of public advisory processes, which has tended to be the focus of previous literature on FACs in Canada (e.g. Hunt 2015; Parkins et al. 2006; Nenko et al. 2019b). This research revealed differences in the ways that sponsors and members valued the process and outcomes of participating in FACs, and demonstrates the need to examine the views of both practitioners and participants of participatory processes. For example, sponsors were particularly interested in process criteria for effectiveness, while members were more likely to value opportunities to exact influence on sponsors' decision-making. Sponsors were more likely to employ committees for planning and certification purposes, while members were attuned to more immediate concerns about forest use and recreation. These differences draw attention to the power dynamics at work within committees, and highlight the need to balance members' desire for input with the planning and certification exercises prioritized by sponsors.

Second, this study supported the findings of previous studies of participatory processes for the environment (e.g. Koontz et al. 2019; Newig and Fristch 2009), that highlighted an emphasis on process, inputs, and socioeconomic outputs rather than ecological outcomes. However, where this study differs is that it contests the separation of process from outcomes by suggesting that fulfillment of a successful FAC process is an important outcome in itself, particularly for the participants themselves. Groups of participants (such as members and sponsors) may value elements of process differently but derive their impressions of effectiveness from these criteria all the same. This finding contrasts with reports of continuing dissatisfaction among segments of FAC participants and outside evaluators, perhaps because satisfaction levels for many participants are connected not to outcomes but to process. Evaluating FAC processes on the basis of outcomes, then, may not be the most relevant criteria for participants. This

finding also serves as a reminder to make explicit the rationale for and objectives of participatory processes and any subsequent evaluations.

A third key contribution of this thesis was to point to the relatively limited contributions of FACs to SFM. Participants and documents indicated that committees had a high level of concern for SFM issues, but that they had limited influence on the outcomes that can contribute to or weaken SFM. Rather, committees were more likely to impact local-level, operational issues like ensuring users had adequate access to forest resources. Further, the perception that sponsors strategically employ committees as a token of their commitment to public engagement in sustainability is very real. These findings are particularly revealing given the positive selection bias used in this study; even among committees that scored highly on questions related to effectiveness, identifying evidence of significant impacts to SFM was a challenge. Findings from this research therefore raise questions about the continuing relevance of current SFM indicators for FACs and suggest that participatory structures for forest governance in Canada merit significant reform.

### 7.3 Final Comments and Future Research

Skocpol (2004) and others (e.g. Kasperson 2006; Parkins and Sinclair 2014) suggest that the decline of citizen involvement in public life in North America is problematic for several reasons, not least of which is the lessening of democratic capacity among ordinary people. In Canada, concerns about environmental governance have increased in recent years as a heightened sense of urgency has attended a cluster of related issues such as climate change, energy production, and increasing natural disasters (Pal 2014; Mildenberger et al. 2016; Ameztegui et al. 2018). The United Nations has called climate change a defining issue of our time and reports that greenhouse gas emissions will require serious reduction in the next few decades to avoid dangerous effects (IPCC 2018).

The forest sector will face a changing climate, increased natural disturbances, and threats to ecosystem health such as mountain pine beetle (Price et al. 2013; Hodge et al. 2017). In addition to these environmental changes, demographic shifts in rural communities, market forces, and shifting political realities mean that forest communities will require significant adaptive capacity in order to thrive going forward (Johnston et al. 2011). It is clear that strong civic involvement must be part of addressing these challenges.

In this light, alternative governance arrangements to FACs ought to be considered to equip communities and forest managers to cope in productive ways. One obvious method for increasing the deliberative influence and decision-making power of FACs is to move them further "up the ladder" of citizen participation (see Figure 2.1). That is, if committees are currently participating mainly in information sharing or consultation activities to placate stakeholder concerns without much real impact on decisions (Manetti 2011), moving further towards the partnership or delegation rungs of Arnstein's ladder would devolve more power towards participants. This could follow the movement towards co-governance that focuses on collective decision-making shared between multiple levels of government, Indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders (Armitage et al. 2012; Berkes 2010).

One possible way to achieve this may be by establishing local forest management corporations like the Nawiinginokiima Forest Management Corporation in Ontario. One research participant described a current desire in their community to create such an organization that would share decision-making power among Indigenous, community, and government representatives to collectively manage the forest license on public land, and most certainly distribute power away from current industrial forest licensees. This was the case in north-western Ontario, where a 50/50 shared-forest tenure agreement was reached between First Nations and industry following an economic downturn in forestry and feedback from Indigenous and local people (Zurba et al. 2016). Community forests are another model noted for their potential to empower local people to retain decision-making power and economic benefits from local forestry operations. In this model, a broader community undertakes forest management to achieve local economic development and usually includes some type of inclusive participation goals (Teitelbaum 2014).

However, Reed et al. (2018) caution against assuming that higher levels on the ladder of participation are always better, and assert that careful consideration of factors such as context, scale, and power should guide the type of participation chosen. Practically speaking, forest governance models in many parts of Canada will likely remain "top-down" in the sense that they are initiated by governing agencies and industry sponsors, and not by the general public. In the case of industry-led committees, it is not likely that companies will voluntarily delegate decision-making power into the hands of members in the absence of legislative requirements to do so. For government-led committees, there is perhaps a stronger mandate to orchestrate collective

decision-making processes to fulfill the duty to incorporate public perspectives in the management of Crown forests. Though, as one practitioner observed, the question of resources and political will ultimately dictates what can be achieved by governmental agencies.

The opportunity to influence local issues was highly valued by community members in this study, suggesting that committees ought to remain at the local level in terms of scale, while continuing to build relationships with surrounding communities and Indigenous nations. At the same time, some practitioners and members called for more strategic-level, deliberative processes. Perhaps, then, committees could advance an adaptive, anticipatory lens at the local level in partnership with new forms of deliberation designed to address regional and strategic issues. Distinguishing between policy and action-oriented collaboratives in this way may help clarify the scope of reconfigured committees while allowing new opportunities for the public to contribute to higher-level discussions (Margerum 2008). Some practitioners suggested that government, or certification programs, might drive these types of policy-oriented conversations within and between communities, including the opportunity to create dialogue with other resource development industries. It is important to ensure that underrepresented groups such as Indigenous peoples, women, youth, and the non-professionalized public are included in designing whatever new governance structure(s) might exist, as a commitment to empowering marginalized voices can help build trust in new institutional processes (Ansell and Gash 2008).

Models for governance of Canada's forests must be considered in context as well. Forest governance structures are largely dictated by social and political institutions, which, in Canada, stem from a history of colonialism and government-directed Crown land use (Beland Lindahl et al. 2017). Unlike other parts of the world, Canada does not have an uninterrupted history of forests being owned and managed by local people (Siry et al. 2005). Though there are pockets of locally controlled forest, community forests account for a small minority of tenure arrangements across the country (Teitelbaum 2016). It is difficult to transform these systems without both public demand to do so and economic or ecological imperatives (Beland Lindahl et al. 2017). It is possible that the forthcoming challenges presented by climate change, natural disturbances, recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights, and a continually precarious market for forest products will necessitate further innovations by governing institutions moving forward.

Given these ecological, social, and economic challenges, further research is needed to explore how forest governance in Canada might continue to evolve. Adaptive co-governance

offers a promising approach focused on continuous learning and monitoring of complex systems. This approach would feature a strong focus on social learning for FAC members in and about the forest (Armitage et al. 2011). Anticipatory governance is another avenue for greater exploration, especially in situations of uncertainty, where future planning scenarios are explored together, prioritized, and then monitored (Hurlbert and Gupta 2016). These methods encourage reflexivity and adaptation to changing contexts, which are key concepts for resilient governance systems (Lockwood 2010).

The potential for exploring adaptive tools for Canadian forest governance may be tested out by research partnerships between existing FACs, forest certification programs, and the forest industry. Indeed, work has begun on how to incorporate an adaptive framework for climate change into SFM practices (Andrews-Key 2018), which could form the basis for further work involving FACs and other research partners. For example, the CCFM has recommended an adaptive management approach in its mountain pine beetle strategy (Hodge et al. 2017). The development of new indicators for SFM is sorely needed, both in terms of forward-looking indicators that promote adaptive capacity (Johnston et al. 2011), and also reflect meaningful Indigenous and public engagement. The importance of sustaining Canada's valuable forest resources will surely compel fruitful opportunities for further innovation and research.

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# APPENDIX A. ETHICS CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 27-Mar-2019

## *Certificate of Re-Approval*

Ethics Number: 15-340

Principal Investigator: Maureen Reed Department: School of Environment and Sustainability

Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted: Canada, Canada
Hinton Wood Products, Canada
Mistik Management Ltd., Canada
Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd. Swan Valley Forest Resources Division, Canada

Student(s): Amanda Lindgren
Bimala Khanal
Maaya Kuri Hitomi
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Funder(s): Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic
School of Environment and Sustainability
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Sponsor:

Title: The Role of Stakeholder and Public Participation in Collaborative Forest Governance in Canada: Contributing to Theory and Practice through Comparative Study

Approved On: 04/12/2018

Expiry Date: 03/12/2019

Acknowledgment Of: Note: Some students have left the project, although they are sometimes consulted about data. Hence, I have not removed their names so that they can still access the data if we a question.

Review Type: Delegated Review

* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above

**CERTIFICATION**

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

**ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.

***Digitally Approved by Vivian Ramsden, PhD***
***Behavioural Research Ethics Board***
***University of Saskatchewan***

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APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
School of Environment and Sustainability
SENS.USASK.CA

***Participant Consent Form***

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:**
**The Role of Stakeholder and Public Participation in Collaborative Forest Governance in Canada: Contributing to Theory and Practice Through Comparative Study**

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**Purpose and Objectives of the Research:**

- The purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of forest advisory committees from the perspective of committee sponsors, specifically forest company representatives and provincial government officials.
- The objectives of this research are to:
    - Explore the extent to which sponsors believe forest advisory committees have influenced Sustainable Forest Management practices and policies.
    - Identify policy areas, management decisions, or specific practices that have been influenced by forest advisory committee recommendations.
    - Develop recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of forest advisory committees.

**Procedures:**

- My participation will consist of attending a 60 minute semi-structured interview with the researcher.
- The information I provide will be collected and recorded on a digital recorder (if I provide consent) or by personal note taking. I can request for the recording to be stopped at any time during the interview, and I should feel comfortable with the nature of this project at all times.

**Funded by:** This study has been funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. The researchers have no conflicts of interest relevant to this study.

**Potential Risks:**

- The risks to participating in this research are minimal; however, you may experience feelings of discomfort, frustration, or anxiety in talking about your experiences.
- **Risk(s) will be addressed by**: ensuring confidentiality of your identity throughout data collection, analysis and reporting, and ensuring that you feel free to discontinue the interview at any time.
- Please feel free to contact the researchers at any time after this interview with any questions or concerns you may have. Please feel free to skip any questions you would rather not answer.

**Potential Benefits:**

- The potential benefits of this research include contributing to improvements in committee processes and forest governance more generally, and sharing effective governance strategies with other forest-based communities.

**Confidentiality:**

- The data from this research project may be published, presented at conferences and used in a graduate thesis; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we may report direct quotations from the interview, identifying information (such as your name and the name of your organization) will be removed from the report.
- The research team will be responsible for managing research participant information and responses. Long-term data storage is the responsibility of the principle investigator, and data storage will be linked to the identity of participants. This is because the research aims to obtain varying perspectives that may be connected to the role or position of respondents. I understand that my personal integrity and privacy will be respected. The researcher will not use my name unless I request it.

**Storage of Data:**

- The information collected from this interview will be stored with the researcher in password-protected digital files and locked offices for a period of six years after completion of this project. After a period of six years, the data files will be destroyed.

There are several options for you to consider if you take part in this interview. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s):

| | |
|---|---|
| I would like to review the transcript from my interview: | **Yes: ___ No: ___** |
| You may use a direct quote from my interview in any publication: | **Yes: ___ No: ___** |
| I want the opportunity to review my quotes prior to any release of information: | **Yes: ___ No: ___** |
| You may quote me and use my name: | **Yes: ___ No: ___** |

**Right to Withdraw:**

- My participation in this project is voluntary. I have the right to withdraw from the project before or during an interview, or to refuse to answer any individual questions. I may withdraw from the study up to the time that the data have been analyzed and writing of the results has started. After that time, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.
- If I decide to withdraw from the project, any information I have given will be promptly destroyed and will not be included in the project in any way. I understand that there is no penalty if I withdraw. My withdrawal will bear no consequences, and no judgments or prejudice will be held against me.

**Questions, Concerns & Follow Up:**

- To obtain results from this study, or if you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the researchers using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

**Consent:**

Option 1 - SIGNED CONSENT – for personal interviews
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| *Name of Participant* | *Signature* | *Date* |

| _____ | _____ |
|---|---|
| *Researcher's Signature* | *Date* |

By signing below, I authorize the inclusion of my name in the acknowledgements section of the thesis.

Participant's Authorization _____ Date_____

I request a copy of the transcript: **Yes** ___ **No** ___

I request a copy of research output(s): **Yes** ___ **No** ___

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT – for telephone interviews
I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before receiving the participant's consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it. In addition, consent may be audio or videotaped.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| *Name of Participant* | *Researcher's Signature* | *Date* |

## APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for your time today! This study is exploring the effectiveness of Forest-sector Advisory Committees across Canada. The benefits of this research include identifying and sharing potential strategies for effective forest governance. I am particularly interested in how and whether the [Committee Name] has influenced and improved outcomes for forest management. I would like to learn more about your experiences working with this committee and its impact on forest management.

1. Please describe your role in relation to the [Committee Name]?

2. How would you describe the purpose of the [Committee Name]?

3. What do you feel are the most important issues that the [Committee Name] has pursued or deliberated upon over the past 3 years?

4. What criteria would you use to determine the effectiveness of the [Committee Name]?

5. Thinking about these criteria, I'm going to ask you to rate how effective you think the committee has been. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very ineffective and 5 being very effective, how effective would you say the committee is?
    a. Can you explain your rating to me? (E.g., If you rated the committee 3/5, why is the committee less than very effective?)

6. Next, I'm going to ask you to rate the level of influence the committee has had on decisions about forest management. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not influential at all and 5 being very influential, how influential would you say the committee is on decisions about forest management?
    a. Do you think the committee should have more, less, or the same level of influence on forest management? Why?

7. During your involvement with the [Committee Name], have you seen changes in the committee's level of influence over time?
    a. If yes, why do you think this is? Can you describe these changes?
    b. If no, why not?

8. Do you think the committee has helped to improve forest management? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

9. Have the recommendations of the committee had an impact on the following aspects of forest management?
    a. Operating procedures or day-to-day practices
    b. Strategic decisions such as forest management plans
    c. Organizational structure or culture of forest organizations

10. Please tell me a bit more about one situation in the last few years where the [Committee Name] influenced an area of operating procedures, strategic planning, or organizational structure or culture.
    a. What were the specific outcome(s) of this situation that resulted from the committee's input?
    b. Why do you think the committee was effective in influencing this/these outcome(s)?

11. Are there any factors limiting the effectiveness of the [Committee Name] in terms of influencing and improving forest management?
    a. If yes, what do you think could be done to address these?

12. Do you think the way the committee governs itself has an impact on its ability to effectively influence forest management? If yes, how so?

13. How does the [Committee Name] work to advance the goals of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)?

14. Using the criteria for SFM developed by the CCFM, I'm going to ask you whether the committee has influenced outcomes related to the following areas (you may answer both at a general level and/or using specific indicators): If yes, how so?
    a. Biological Diversity
    b. Ecosystem condition and productivity
    c. Soil and Water
    d. Role in Global Ecological Cycles
    e. Economic and Social Benefits
    f. Society's Responsibility
    g. Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

15. How does the work of the [Committee Name] contribute to third-party forest certification programs (CSA)?

16. Are there specific actors or institutions that influence forest management outside of the committee (eg. Government, companies, non-profit organizations)?
    a. How important is the influence of these actors compared to the influence of the committee(s)?

17. Is there anything else you would like to share about the committee and its work, or something that I haven't asked about yet?

18. Are there any relevant documents you think I should look at in relation to this topic (e.g. forest management plans, meeting minutes)? Could you provide me with a copy?

19. Do you think a follow-up visit would provide any additional insights about this topic? Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up interview/visit?

APPENDIX D. OUTCOMES INFLUENCED BY COMMITTEES

**Table A.1 Types of Outcomes Influenced, According to Groups of Interviewees**

| Outcome | Example | Sponsors | Members | Practitioner |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operating procedures | Moved the location of a road corridor to protect habitat and hunting grounds | 11 | 6 | 7 |
| Strategic decisions | Provided input on forest values to create an objective in the FMP | 14 | 3 | 5 |
| Corporate culture | Encouraged greater transparency on indicators and results to the public | 9 | 7 | 5 |

# APPENDIX E. CODE BOOK

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **#1** | **Effectiveness** | We don't have a formal approach at present to measure effectiveness of the committee. I do it. | 19 |
| | Rating | I would say the group itself is very effective. So 5 for me. | 18 |
| **Influence** | | Well, I think they're influential because they have our attention. So when the group provides us advice we absolutely pay attention to it. It's something we don't get often out of the group to be quite honest. But when they do give us advice we take it very seriously and we do pay attention. | 66 |
| | Change Over Time | I would say that it has been continued – it continues to be effective. I haven't really seen any huge shifts in directions or any large initiatives that the group has undertaken. | 50 |
| | Government | So some objectives are established by the government. And I think the PAG could have been engaged by the province on some of these decisions. I just think it's a lost opportunity. | 46 |
| | Indigenous Involvement | And then First Nations is also a challenge. I mean we have a whole consultation program and relationship program that I look after separate out of this. And that's kind of the issue that you have is that the First Nations don't want to be lumped in with the public. | 72 |
| | Partner organizations | It's absolutely everything. It has a huge influence on us. There's almost nothing we do that isn't influenced by them. | 8 |
| | User Groups | I'd say the most influential group – and this depends on the forest – but it's usually either a tourism cohort of operators that could have the biggest affect on the land base or First Nations Communities depending on the local situation and players. | 81 |
| **Purpose** | | The purpose of the PAG is officially it helps Mistik Management to achieve its requirements for CSA certification that we have. It's a requirement that we have an official public advisory group that represents all the communities across our forest license area.<br><br>So their purpose is basically to provide us as a licensee seeking input to develop an operational forest management plan, input with respect to local values and objectives to consider in drafting up that forest management plan. | 42 |
| | Information sharing | The stuff that they're most interested in, like where you could get the most interest out of the group is when they're given informational presentations by various experts.<br><br>Here's what's happening at the mill, here's some of the problems we're having with harvest due to weather conditions, you know, there just isn't as much opportunity to really kind of engage about sustainable forestry, but at least it's an opportunity to find out what's going on. | 108 |
| | Certification | The purpose of the PAG is officially it helps Mistik Management to achieve its requirements for CSA certification that we have. | 80 |

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Process** | | I think for me it's more about how is the committee built and functioning that will determine if it's effective at what it's role is in the process. | 64 |
| Members | Attendance | When I go to an LCC meeting I look at attendance. What level of attendance are we getting? Are members consistently attending? | 27 |
| | Enduring membership | We have long term folks that have been with us right from conception. | 34 |
| | Knowledge of Members | Occasionally it happens where when we're talking about things like our GIS systems and making decisions on computer generated models and that kind of thing sometimes it's a little over the top for some people regarding that. | 74 |
| | Member satisfaction | Make sure everybody is happy. Make sure people go away thinking they had a good time and learned something. And we always poll them all the time. "What is it that interests you? What is it you want to learn more about?" Unless you get the feedback it's very hard to survive.<br><br>I think the Mistik PAG is great. Like I don't really see any need for improvement there. | 34 |
| | Member turnover | My point on that is they have some longstanding membership mixed with some new cycling membership. So they have a lot of experience with some new blood, new membership coming in to bring new ideas. | 25 |
| | Member conduct | I think there is individuals that can sometimes sour the discussion with personal agendas. I think it's just sometimes issues are close to their hearts because it's something – that they may remove their stakeholder hat and put on their personal hat, you know?<br><br>I think it's about helping people bring their best self forward in these situations about really tough topics. Taking some of the politics away, taking some of the emotions away and just creating that space to be able to have that type of conversations. | 22 |
| Sponsors | Facilitation | The facilitator can make a huge difference. If they're no good. In any meeting room if you've got twenty people all giving their opinions at once that's anarchy. So we have a facilitator who tries to keep stuff on track as well as make sure nothing blows up. | 28 |
| | Field Trip | We do a field trip every year to somewhere. And the field trip is based on consensus of the room of what you want to see. | 29 |
| | Representation | So I guess number one in any advisory committee like this you need to have balanced representation of the public and of the interest groups that are on the forest. It's important to actually to have a diversity of stakeholders.<br><br>I think one of the key things around an effective advisory committee is to have representation from all of the stakeholders within the community. And I think Temagami has done that. | 56 |

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Responsiveness | They feel that it's a comfortable process for people to be able to speak their voice and that we're going to consider their input and make changes accordingly to any of our indicators or targets if they request us to do so.<br>They always respond. If they don't have a proper response or need to find something out or have action item out of it. They always follow up because it's in the meeting notes. We follow up meeting notes every time. So, that process happens and they close that loop. | 56 |
| | Member Support | I think if they didn't feel supported they would have less – there'd be definitely less interest for them to show up also. So the MNR's support is important for them to be able to be effective. | 39 |
| | Trust | I think trust is high. Trust is there. There's not a lot of uneasiness or uncertainty with things. I think there's enough trust with the parties that if there are issues that they'll resolve them in a really positive way. | 11 |
| | Relationship building | I think the key part is the relationship. If you don't have a relationship, established relationship, before conflict arises, then it's very difficult to solve any issues. | 18 |
| Shared | Governance | I'd also say a clear terms of reference. So the group has to understand what their roles are. They have to understand how decisions should be made and how to communicate with each other fairly and openly without prejudice.<br><br>There's no formal way to approach it in the process and often that comes from the northern communities, right? So, there's things there about kind of cultural issues I would say in terms of running meetings and running a meeting that fits for everyone. | 69 |
| | Consensus building | So there is a sense that "I may not agree with it but can I live with it?" So the group moves forward because people are open enough to say "Yeah, I got what I needed out of that discussion or that decision. You know, it may not be exactly what I wanted but I got what I needed out of it." | 9 |
| | Public Participation | They're promoting the fact that there is a dialogue regarding forest management out there. And they're trying to establish that dialogue and to establish it and increase it where possible.<br><br>We do annual open houses. And often we get nobody or maybe one or two people coming to the open houses. And we're a bit frustrated with that because some might take that as an indication that everybody is happy with what we're doing and I don't think that. | 28 |
| | Smoothness of process | And nobody had any concerns. There was silence. Like you worry is silence consent because people are happy and trust you? Or is silence they're just not engaging or they're bored or which is it?<br><br>The other end is if they just sit there and they just say, yes, yes, yes. And they agree with everything. Then there's no ripples either. And the ripples, if they're always smooth [then] there's not | 27 |

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | necessarily slowdowns in process. So it's efficient but is it effective? | |
| **#2** | **Outcomes** | Not that I can be aware of… in terms of something actually in terms of operating procedures or high level strategic or organizational structure or culture, I'd say no.<br><br>I haven't seen any earth-shattering decisions that the group has embarked on. Like I said to tell the honest truth the only things I've witnessed so far are refinements of language. | 52 |
| | Corporate culture | So it's the precautionary sort of idea about having these advisory groups is that they change the way you do business just by their very existence. If they weren't there then you would probably do things differently. And maybe not even on purpose. Like maybe you might not do something on purpose differently. But you would just go about your business differently because you're not getting that constant input from the public you know in a sort of organized way. | 53 |
| | Forest Management Planning | As part of our forest management planning process we had what we call a Desired Forest and Benefits Meeting. And that is meant to feed into setting objectives and solidifying the strategic portion of the plan. You're basically asking the question "What do you want to see in the future for this forest? What are your desired benefits? What do you want the forest to look like and what kind of benefits do you want to realize from the forest?" | 112 |
| | VOITs | And we look for feedback on those VOITs. So "What do you think? Are you comfortable with the wording? Do you understand it?" that sort of thing.<br><br>So we actually discussed, you know, in depth and that was a really powerful, informative process where people actually could really discuss what it meant. So we need a biodiversity target, what do you want it to be? | 15 |
| | Operating procedures | I would say over the last number of years most public advisory groups have probably been ineffective in changing operations on the ground because most of it is now so highly regulated I don't think you can change a thing.<br><br>So the province requires 5 meters over any water. And we moved that out to it's now 23 meters. So that's a direct result of input from the group. Not the actual number. Like the group didn't say "Make it 23." The group said "Can it be wider than that? That's one of the main concerns." | 47 |
| | Access & Recreation | West Fraser doesn't do that. They don't treat our trails the way I figured they should out in the cut blocks. But if I'm not out there to say anything It would be even worse.<br><br>They focus mostly on interest on who has the biggest concerns around access. So access is a big one, viewscapes in terms of ensuring protection to the view. Gates. Gates are a big thing because of access because of the circumstances on the Temagami. | 36 |

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **#3** | **Sustainable Forest Management** | At the margin. But no, I cannot say that it's a big achievement in terms of sustainability. People from the government will reply "But annual allowable cut has been calculated in accord with sustainability criteria," which I'm quite sure is true.<br><br>We've identified a core of an IFL that we're going to protect that we're working with our companies to not harvest on. So it really works well to have these two kinds of systems in place and people are definitely in support of protecting intact forest landscape. | 56 |
| | Biological Diversity | So what we end up with is quite a large stockpile of branches and tops at the roadside that we typically pile and burn. And so for example our trapping value representative suggested that it would be nice to leave one or two of those piles there. Don't burn them because they provide good habitat for marten and fisher and other species like that. And so we started to do that. | 54 |
| | Economic and Social Benefits | And one of those issues is using the downed woody debris for generating power in the mill. And I think they actually saw that as a business opportunity because they actually had the three considerations regarding making a decision on that. Because it was important for the community to be able to generate its own power. It would be a new business for someone. It could provide new jobs. | 34 |
| | Ecosystem health | A high level of interest in reforestation activities. Reforestation successes. So how is the forest doing? How is it coming back? Where are we succeeding? Do we have any areas where we're failing? | 14 |
| | Mountain Pine Beetle | The committee is quite concerned about mountain pine beetle and the potential effect it might have on the local economy because of our operations and how they get affected.<br><br>We are all a little nervous about what the mountain pine beetle is going to do to our mature pine forest. I mean we've seen BC, we know what it looks like. It's kinda scary. | 24 |
| **#4** | **Limitations** | The most limiting thing is recruiting good people with the time to be with us. It's a constant challenge. You're asking for people to give their time.<br><br>But sometimes we have to realize that they have a limited capacity with understanding and there is the odd issue that may be a little broad reaching for the PAG. So if you don't understand it you can't really make an effective decision on it. | 68 |
| | Recommendations | Maybe more opportunity for feedback. It's one thing to put on a presentation and say does anyone have any questions or concerns versus fill out this form and we'll look at it. It would be good for more opportunity to give a little bit of feedback.<br><br>And for the situation specific to Quebec it should be very interesting if those advisory committees could be a point of entry to deal with actual conflict. I'm not daring to say that it should be the place to solve the problem. But that should be a point of entry. | 26 |

| Objective | Code | Quote | # References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Committee Characteristics** | | | 7 |
| | Historical conflict | And part of it was that because there was a lot of backlash from people who didn't want more forest companies they decided we better start putting together a really good public advisory group to hash over all the issues and see if we can get past them. | 12 |
| | Length of time | And I've been doing that for twenty years here. And FRAG has been in existence since 1989 | 15 |
| | Local context | You sort of have to keep in mind that this is a town that has oil and gas in it, has forestry and mining. So it's a very diversified town | 24 |